

Walch's Series of Books of Old Van Diemen's Land. No. 2

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*Life and Adventures*  
OF  
*William Thornley*

In Old Van Diemen's Land,  
1817-1820

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AN EMIGRANT TO VAN DIEMEN'S LAND IN 1817

Who took up land in the Bothwell District.

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*His Early Struggles and Adventures  
with Blacks and Bushrangers*

BY CHARLES ROWCROFT

A MAGISTRATE OF THE COLONY

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ONE SHILLING

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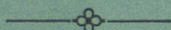
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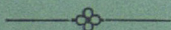


# MARTIN CASH,

THE BUSHRANGER  
OF  
VAN DIEMEN'S LAND IN 1843-4.



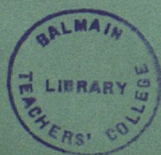
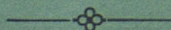
A Personal Narrative of His Exploits in the  
Bush and His Experiences at  
PORT ARTHUR  
and  
NORFOLK ISLAND.



*Twenty-second Thousand.*

*With Illustrations.*

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Walch's Shilling Series of Old Tasmanian Books, No. IV.

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THE  
PERILS AND  
ADVENTURES  
OF  
*Mr. William Thornley.*

*One of the Pioneer Settlers of Van Diemen's Land,  
1817-1830*

BY CHARLES ROWCROFT

A MAGISTRATE OF THE COLONY

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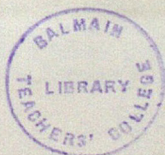
## PREFACE.

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THE narrative of the perils, difficulties, and adventures of a pioneer settler in Van Diemen's Land contained in the following pages dates from the year 1817, and depicts so vividly and truthfully the state of the Colony in those early days that it is well worth preserving and bringing within the reach of all.

Mr. Charles Rowcroft was long resident in the Colony, and in the person of William Thornley describes events drawn from his personal experience both as a Colonist and a Magistrate. Especially interesting are the graphic narratives of encounters with Blacks and Bushrangers, showing the perils which surrounded the first planting of homesteads in the "bush" and the pluck of Englishmen in overcoming difficulties.

Mr. Rowcroft became in subsequent years a well-known writer, but this, his first, was also his most successful work, and under the title of "Tales of the Colonies, or The Adventures of an Emigrant," ran through many editions. Much that appeared in the original work, published in London in 1846, relating to emigration and the process of settling in a new country, has been omitted, but the narrative portion has been preserved.



*Ed. Dept [Library of A. J. Gray, Armadale.]*

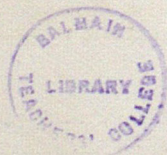
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# THE PERILS AND ADVENTURES OF MR. WILLIAM THORNLEY.

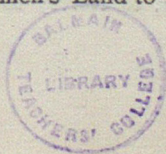
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## CHAPTER I.

### THE SETTLER'S JOURNAL.

IT is now twenty-two years since I left London for Van Diemen's Land. When I got on board ship, I remember I found many of the passengers keeping journals, so I did the same, though I can't say I found, at first, much to put in it; however, the habit of keeping a journal stuck to me after I landed, so that I was never easy at night unless I wrote down what had occurred during the day. I am glad of it now, as I find that the looking back on what I have gone through is useful to me, and makes me the more thankful for what I have got now, and the reading of it will, I think, be of advantage to those who come after me; so I will first describe how it was that I came to emigrate, and then I shall copy all my bits and scraps of journals fairly out, that those who may think that some profit is to be got from them may easily read them.

I was in difficulties in England. There was great distress in the country; all seemed to go wrong. I had carried on, for many years, a pretty good business at Croydon, in the corn trade. I did something with coals, too, the canal being handy (by the by, that gave me the idea when I went abroad of the advantage of water-carriage), and I never refused any sort of small trading that seemed likely to turn to profit. But the corn business was my mainstay, and that brought me a good deal into communication with farmers, and their way of farming; but I found that farming was a very different thing here in Van Diemen's Land to what it was in Surrey.





I remember, as if it was yesterday, that one morning, when I went to the corn-market, I found a cluster of farmers and others standing round a neighbour of mine reading a letter ; it was from a son of his—a wild sort of chap—who had gone out as mate of a vessel to Sydney, or Botany Bay, as it was called then. By the by, Botany Bay and Sydney are quite different places ; Botany Bay lies round to the south of Sydney, and there is no town at all there. Sir Joseph Banks named it Botany Bay from the number of new plants which he found there, but the town of Sydney was fixed thirteen miles further to the north. Well, the reading of this letter caused a good deal of amusement, speaking of the kangaroos, and the natives, and the bushrangers ; but what surprised us most was to hear how easily the young fellow had turned farmer ; for farming was not at all in his line, as he had scarcely looked into a farm in his life when he was in England. The accounts contained in this letter of the beauty of the country, of the fertility of the soil, and of the largeness of the crops, made a great impression on me, and gave rise to vague ideas and designs, which dwelt in my mind, and set me about making further inquiries. However, I said nothing about it at home at this time, waiting till I had acquired more information, but went on with my business as usual ; but my business did not go on as usual with me. My purpose is not to describe how a man breaks down in England, but how he gets on in the colonies, so I shall say no more of my losses and difficulties than this—that with one failing and another failing, and people crowding into the trade and taking the bread out of one another's mouth, and altogether, I found that it would not do any longer. So one evening, after a hard day's work, and no profit, but all loss, I made up my mind to put an end to it.

I explained to my wife exactly our condition and all our circumstances, and after a long consultation, her good sense coming to her aid, and, most of all, her strong affection for her five children mastering all other considerations, she fell in with my views, and it was agreed that, as we had made up our minds to this decisive step, the sooner we carried it into effect the better.

Well, the great point being settled, that of my wife's consent and hearty concurrence in the project, all the rest went on rapidly enough.

I found, after scraping together all I could get, that I could just manage to muster up £1,150 ; little enough to begin the world anew with, and with a wife, five children, and my wife's mother, to convey to the other side of the

globe. It ought to be observed, too, that my wife had been well educated, and had always lived in a lady-like way ; and, although she had always been an industrious housewife, she had never had any practice in the hard work which, for the first year or two, falls on the settler in a new colony. Besides this £1,150 in money, we had our beds and bedding, and blankets and linen, and such household articles, in plenty ; and a variety of things which lie about a house, and seem of no value, we took out with us, and found them valuable, for use or sale, in the new country. As to the bulk of our furniture, we sold it all, as I was told that it would be several years before we could have a suitable place to put it in, and that I should find the money more useful ; that I must rough it for some time, and think of nothing but stock—that is, of sheep and cattle. This advice was very good, as I afterwards found, and I was as happy, for many months, sitting on the stump of a tree, with my wife opposite me on another, as if we had reclined on the softest sofas in London. But there was not much time for reclining. I took care to carry with us all the usual tools imperatively wanted on first settling, such as saws, axes, chisels, augers, &c. I had the good fortune to listen to the advice of the captain of a ship, and took out all the furnishing of a blacksmith's forge, which I found of the greatest use to me. I shall not particularise here the list of articles proper for a settler to take out with him. I will only say that it is better to have too many tools than too few ; for, to want a tool in the bush, a saw, or an axe, is an inconvenience that often stops important work. I was wrong in the sort of nails that I took out ; they were good enough for the soft deals and other woods usual in England, but too weak for the hard woods of New South Wales. I took out two pairs of cart-wheels, with their boxes and axles complete. These were very useful, but they make them in the colony now as good, and nearly as cheap as they can be imported ; and the colonial wood, when well seasoned, stands the summer heat better. But I see I am forestalling my journal.

Now to our voyage, which I shall make short enough. We set sail from Gravesend on the 7th September, 1816. We touched at the Cape of Good Hope, but I shall not stop to describe a place that has been so often described before. I want to hasten the way to the colony. After a passage of about five months, we arrived at Hobart Town on the 3rd February, 1817. Hobart Town is the chief town or capital of Van Diemen's Land, at the south end of the island. The new ideas which the words "north" and "south" conveyed



in those parts confused me at first, for, contrary to the impression which they convey in Europe, the north wind on the opposite side of the globe is the warm one, and the south the cold one. "These warm north winds" and "these cold south gales" sounded oddly, and it was some time before I got used to the expressions. The aspect of the new country was not encouraging, and I felt a little damped at first. All the country up the river, from Storm Bay Passage to Hobart Town, had a mournful, desolate appearance. The trees had a sombre look, and the grass was a dirty brown, excepting here and there a green patch, where I was told it had been recently burnt. It looked like the close of autumn instead of the middle of summer, which it was, we arriving, as I said before, on the 3rd February, and the months of winter and summer being reversed here in this topsy-turvy place. A brown and dusky autumnal tint seemed to pervade all nature, and the place had a quiet, sleepy appearance, as if everything had been standing still and was waiting for settlers to come and improve it. Mount Wellington, as the large high mountain, about four thousand feet high, is called, at the back of the town to the left as you go up the river, had a little cap of snow on its summit, which I have observed in summer several times since, but it seldom remains more than a few hours at that season of the year. The town had a straggling, irregular appearance; a pretty good house here and there, and the intervening spaces either unbuilt on or occupied by mean little dwellings, little better than rude huts. It is to be borne in mind that I am speaking of Hobart Town as it was twenty-two years ago; since then great changes have taken place.

One thing I can't help adverting to, and that is, the surprising number of dogs that kept us awake for some nights after we arrived in the town with their incessant barking. At that time every one had a kangaroo-dog who could contrive to keep one, and what with these and others, first one set up a growl, and then another caught it up, and he was of course answered from another part of the town, so that presently hundreds of dogs, watch-dogs, kangaroo-dogs, and mongrels of all sorts and sizes, all would set up such a barking and tearing, that we thought to be sure something dreadful must be the matter; that the convicts had risen, or the natives had fired the town. We wished that all the dogs had their tails stuffed down their throats to stop their noise. But we soon got used to this, like the apprentice that was lost, and found asleep in the copper that the workmen were hammering at outside; and afterwards we

found the value of the faithful and intelligent kangaroo-dogs in the wild bush; for their vigilance saved us all from being murdered by the natives, or perhaps burned to death, as I shall have to relate in its proper place. Well, I did not care, at this time, for the statistics, as the term is, of the town or the colony; I was too much taken up with my own statistics, and with arranging to settle ourselves on our land and get out of the town, for we soon found that our money would melt away very fast if we stayed there, and no return for it, everything being so dear. I paid 35s. per week for the wretched place that we got shelter in: as to going to an inn, of which there were one or two indifferent ones, of a public-house order, that would have been ruin indeed. Meat was 9d. and 10d. per lb.; bread a little cheaper than in London; as to milk and butter, that we were obliged to go without. Butter, for several years after, was from 5s. to 10s. 6d. a lb.; the common Irish salt butter sold for 2s. 6d. per lb., and that rank and oily. I was puzzled to understand how it was that there was not plenty of milk and butter in an agricultural country; but I soon found out that there was a reason for everything. To get milk from the wild cows, in a country without fences, you had to catch them first.

Altogether, I did not like the look of matters; but I was assured that the interior of the country was more inviting, and I was advised to lose no time in getting on my land. My first care was to see all our goods and chattels safely landed from the ship, and properly housed in a store belonging to a merchant in the town. This I had to pay dear enough for. I was rather puzzled to know what to do with my money, in a land where every finger was a fish-hook; but the Governor allowed me to deposit it in the Treasury. As it was all in dollars, the weight was pretty heavy, more than I could carry by myself; and I said jokingly to my wife that I had sometimes read of the embarrassment of riches, but that I had never felt it before. After all expenses of outfit and passage paid, I found myself in the colony with 3,600 dollars in hand, being about £780 sterling, having purchased the dollars in London at four shillings and fourpence a-piece. With this sum I had to set about establishing myself in the wilderness.

I had now to turn my mind to the fixing on a place to settle on. The way of obtaining land was very different then to what it is now. The mode of obtaining land was thus:—

Before leaving England, I applied to the office of the Secretary of State for the Home Department by letter,



stating my intention to emigrate to Van Diemen's Land with my family, and requesting an authority to obtain a grant of land when I got there. In reply to this, I received a sealed letter, addressed to the Lieutenant-Governor, and which, I was informed on an interview with the clerk to that department at the Home Office, contained the necessary authority. This letter, I afterwards ascertained, was an authority to allot to me a grant of land according to my means. When I arrived at Hobart Town, I waited on the Governor with this letter. The Governor, whom I saw himself, and who was very kind in his information and advice, made a note of my circumstances, of the amount of my property, of the number of my children and family, and of my views in coming to the colony, and he dwelt much on the *bona fide* nature of my intentions to go on the land and work it. I told him that I had come with the intention of settling as a farmer, and of residing on my land, and cultivating it myself. At this time in the year 1817, this class of settlers was always specially favoured by the colonial Government, as indeed it was right and politic to do, for it was precisely the class that was wanted in the colony to form its inhabitants of the interior, to raise food for the colony, and to create establishments for relieving the Government of the expense of maintaining the convicts. It aided the plan also of reforming the convicts, by removing from them the temptations of the town, and of habituating them to healthy work in new positions, where they would be removed from old habits and associations. Being one of this desirable class, I was told by the Governor that he considered me entitled to as large a grant of land as was consistent with his general instructions; and that he should allot to me twelve hundred acres. Well, I thought, this was a good beginning. Twelve hundred acres of land of one's own has a good sound, and is a pleasant contemplation; but the next thing was where to find them; for I heard so many contradictory accounts of the various parts of the country, every one praising his own district, as fancy or interest dictated, that I was fairly bewildered, and almost at my wit's end which way to turn my steps. But as the choice was one that must be made, and that quickly too, I set heartily about it. Leaving my wife and children, and her mother, who, though old, had the excellent quality of being trustworthy, as comfortable as I could make them in their lodgings in the town, and having arranged with a resident family to have an eye to their safety in my absence, I put my gun over my shoulder, and started up the country.

## CHAPTER II.

## IN SEARCH OF GOOD LAND.

HOBART TOWN was quite still when I left it, about five o'clock in the morning, but the sun was getting up beautifully. There were only one or two stragglers about. I fancied the air was beginning to feel warm already, and the summer sun in Van Diemen's Land is no joke in a hay-field, though I don't remember that I was ever inconvenienced by it more than in England. When I rose the little hill going out of the town I stopped, and turned back to take a look at the town I was leaving.

I certainly was much struck with it. It looked so like the beginning of a town there could be no mistake about it. It was all interspersed with the poles and scaffolding of houses being built, and it looked almost as if a lot of people had come only the night before, and had begun to set up a city to dwell in. On my right hand, as I stood on the hill looking down upon the town, was Mount Wellington, with thick, white, fleecy clouds hanging down from its top and concealing its head. All the space between the town and the mountain was covered with trees and shrubs, having for the most part a dusky green foliage. Nearly fronting me stood the Government-house, unfinished; and towards the left was the broad river Derwent, extending as far as the eye could reach to the south, till it joined the sea. Lying at anchor close in shore were two merchant vessels and a few boats. It certainly was a magnificent sight; the noble river, the fine harbour, allowing ships of five hundred tons burthen to anchor within a stone's throw of the end of the jetty; the tiny patches of cultivated land here and there, which seemed to give a hint of the treasures unclaimed around, and requiring only tillage to reveal them; and, above all, the air of sleeping enterprise which the quiet town in the early morning seemed to be invested with, formed together a remarkable picture. I stood looking at it a good while, and wondering what it would come to, when suddenly the bell of the convicts' barrack yard was rung to summon the Government-men to work; and it served to summon me too, for I fancy that without being aware of it, I was a little loth to leave human habitations and plunge into the bush among the natives. However, I was on a high road as yet, though not a very good one, so after giving a little look at the spot where I knew my wife and children were dwelling, I



cast a glance at the priming of my fowling-piece and marched on.

I met nothing between *Camp*, as Hobart Town was then called, and New Town, about three miles. I remember I felt very lonely; I had not warmed into the work, and I felt all the hesitation which a man feels when he sets out to take a journey without having first determined where he intends to go. I was in fact a seeking where to go, and looking out for some information to guide me as to the point whither to direct my steps, with the impression on my mind, from my experience in the town, that every one would endeavour to deceive me as to what land was vacant, and which was the best part to settle on. With all these anxious thoughts I continued my way, passing one or two miserable-looking cabins by the road, till I reached the ferry on the right, about ten miles from Camp. Here the river is still broad; about as broad as the Thames at Chelsea. At this place I made a halt, in order to decide whether I should continue my road to New Norfolk, about twenty-one miles from Camp, or cross over and take the high road, such as it was, leading from the one side of the island to the other, that is, to Launceston, on the banks of the River Tamar. I walked down to the edge of the water and talked to the ferry-men, who were busy about their boat. They all advised me to go on to New Norfolk, where there was plenty of fine land, as they said, and a settled district. The master of the ferry, and of the inn belonging to it hard by, came up, and I asked him what he thought. He looked at me a bit as if to measure what I was worth, and shook his head in a very wise manner.

"You're a new settler?" said he.

"Yes," said I, "very new; and should feel much obliged if anyone would direct me a little which way I had better go to look for land."

"Much land?" said he.

"Twelve hundred acres."

"Not much for a sheep-farm, but enough to make a tidy homestead."

"I think it is; but where can I find a good bit of land?"

"Breakfasted?" said the landlord.

"Before I set out."

"Oh! Well I tell you what I should do if I was you; you had better take up your quarters with me for a day or two, and then I'll see what can be done."

"And then," said I.

"And then you can cross the ferry and——"

"Thank ye," says I; for I saw which way the wind was blowing! the ferry-men would have me go to New Norfolk to save themselves the trouble of pulling me over for their master, and their master would have me spend my money at his inn, and I doubt not advised everyone, as he advised me, to cross his ferry, whether or no. So, thought I, I see I must depend on myself; now, if New Norfolk is already settled, that argues that it was considered a good place to settle in when there was plenty of good land to pick and choose, so I'll go and see what the place is made of.

"Good morning," said I to the landlord, who was standing looking at me, and his ferry-men looked at him; "I shall see what sort of land they have at New Norfolk."

"You had better wait till evening," said the landlord, "you'll find it precious warm."

"I don't like to lose time."

"Take a glass of rum?"

"No, I thank you, I never drink it." (The ferry-men grinned.)

"Or a glass of brandy?"

"No—much obliged."

"I've got some whiskey—real farantosh: or Irish, with the true smack of the turf in it. Or——"

"Thank you, I never drink spirits in the morning; but I should like to have a drop of beer. Although it's early, I've had a longish walk—and a little mild ale——"

"Beer!—mild ale! Lord love ye, why you haven't come out here to drink beer! and mild ale! have you? You'll find no beer up the country. Rum's the stuff; that's our drink in this colony."

"Why, you have water, I suppose?"

"Water! Water! Oh, yes; to be sure we have water; we always use it for tea; and, I can tell you, a cup of tea, with a glass of rum in it, is very refreshing."

"I had rather have a drop of milk in my tea," said I.

"Why, maybe some would; but you see use is everything, and it isn't so easy to get milk in these parts, so that rum is mother's milk to us now. Ha! ha! You'll get used to a settler's life by and by, rum and all."

"Well," said I, "barring the rum, I hope I soon shall;" and so I took my leave, not over-pleased with the conversation, nor with the landlord of the Ferry. However, it was his business to make people spend money at his inn, and cross his ferry; and we are all somewhat selfish, I take it, in our own vocations.

The sun now began to be pretty warmish, and my watch



told me it was ten o'clock. Thought I, if it is warm at ten, I shall be melted at mid-day; but to New Norfolk I must go; so I put my best foot foremost, and strode away manfully. In about an hour's time, however, the sun's rays became so powerful that, not yet having recovered my habits of walking, I began to give way; and I looked to the right and left for a likely place to rest in. As I cast my eyes about, I spied a rough-looking man seated on the ground at a little distance from the road, near a little rocky mount, drinking water from a spring which oozed over the shelf of a little platform of stone. Thought I, this is not one of your rum drinkers, as he is soaking in the pure element with such gusto; but he's a queer-looking chap too. It was the first of the species that I had occasion closely to observe, so I may as well describe him.

His feet were enveloped in a pair of old mocassins made out of a sheep's skin, with the wool outside, but much worn, it seemed with travel. His legs were bare. A pair of very old knee-breeches, which once had buttons and strings, but which now had none, encased his nether person. The principal part of his dress was a frock-coat of kangaroo-skin, or rather of many skins, dried with the hair on, and presenting a curious variety of shade from wear and dirt. On his head he wore a hat, if hat it could be called, which once seemingly was black, but now was of no particular colour, the crown whereof was ingeniously fastened to the body with the fibres of the stringy bark tree, albeit that it permitted to peep forth the ragged ends of some dry native grass, which its owner had thrust within it (seeing that it was too large, not having been originally made for him), to maintain it in a becoming and convenient position. A grizzly beard, of a fortnight's growth, gave a finish to his ferocious appearance. I surveyed this hairy individual with much curiosity, as I advanced towards him, and with some mistrust, for there were bush-rangers abroad, and although this was not a likely place to meet with them, I was strange to the country, and thought it best to be on my guard. I kept my hand, therefore, convenient to the lock of my piece, with the muzzle before me, careless like, but quite ready. My precaution, however, did not escape the observation of the kangaroo man, who now, turning his face to me and looking up, said in a country-like tone:

"You needn't be afeared o' me, master. If you want water, come and drink. Thank God, there *is* water in the country, plenty and sweet enough—except where it's brackish. Drink;" (seeing that I hesitated) "well—I'll go farther off;

no wonder, perhaps, you're timid a bit. If you'd gone through what I've gone through in this wretched country, you'd have reason enough for it."

There was something about the man's manner, and about his face too, though the sourest-looking I ever saw, that made me feel there was no harm in him, so I stooped down and had the most delicious draught I think I ever tasted. I had learnt the value of water by my long voyage from England, but I think I never, even as a schoolboy, enjoyed a drink of water so much before. This mutual draught from the same fountain established at once a sort of companionship between me and the man of skins, and we sat down together by the side of the spring.

I could not help gazing at my new acquaintance with a sort of wonder, and thinking in my own mind that he formed a queer figure in the foreground of the Arcadian scenery of the new country.

"You look at me."

"I can't help it," said I: "I don't mean any offence; but pray, do all the people in this country dress in your style? I don't mean to say that it is not a very proper dress, and" (fearing to anger him) "very becoming and suitable to the country; but I only arrived a fortnight since, and everything seems strange to me."

"Not stranger than it does to me," said the man. "How do you think I came by this *dress*, as you call it? Well, you needn't guess; I'll tell you; I'm dressed by voluntary contribution."

"Voluntary contribution! How's that?"

"Why, you see, about ten days ago, I was met by the bushrangers on the other side of the island, and they stripped me of everything."

"The devil they did," said I, and I clapped my hand on my gun.

"Oh, you needn't be afeared—there's none on 'em here, and I hope you won't meet any in this horrible country. Lord forgive me—I wish I was well out of it. Fool that I was to leave my old master in Shropshire to come out here to get land of my own. Ah!—well—go farther and fare worse. These rascals, these bushrangers, took every individual thing I had about me, and kept me for three days to carry their baggage for them. The one that took my coat, and a prime velveteen one it was, with plenty of pockets, chucked his kangaroo-skin jacket to me; 'Here, my hearty,' says he, 'is something to remember us by. You can't say we haven't treated you well, for you have shared of the best



with us, and we have shown you all the country.' These mocassins I got at a stock-keeper's hut, who let me fit the sheep-skin warm to my feet, and they were comfortable enough at first, but now they are dry, they get unpleasant. But it's not long that I'll wear 'em, for I'll go back home again to England, if I have to work my passage. Heaven send that I was out of this horrible place! I do really think it was made before the other countries were begun, and found not to answer. There is nothing in it like anything anywhere else, and what's worse, there's nothing in it to eat."

"Nothing to eat! that's a bad job; how do people subsist, then?"

"Oh! I don't mean there's nothing to eat exactly; though I don't know what one can get all over the country but mutton chops and dampers; but I mean that the country furnishes nothing of itself—no animals, no fruits, no roots. Now I thought before I came here, there must be plenty of fruit in a warm climate; but, bless your heart, you may look a long time in the woods for anything to eat, I can tell you. The only thing like a fruit that I've ever seen is a cherry wrong made, with the stone growing outside. I did eat a lot of them one day when I was hard run, as I observed the birds eat 'em, and a pretty murmuring they produced in my inside; but that's neither here nor there. What I say is this: this is the worst country, and the most dreadful place that ever man was in, and all I wish is that I was out of it."

"I am sorry," said I, "to hear you give so bad an opinion of the country I have come to settle in, Mr. —; you have not told me your name."

"Crab—Samuel Crab; that's my name, and that was my father's name. You see I'm a Shropshire man, and for five-and-thirty years I was head ploughman to Squire Dampier, at Dampier Hall. A good master he was to me, and a fool was I for leaving him; but it all came from reading and writing."

"From reading and writing!—how was that?"

"Why, you see, one day I was at the blacksmith's about a plough, and as I had nothing to do, I took up a newspaper that was there (odd rot the writers on 'em!) and began reading about the colony of Van Diemen's Land, of all places in the world, what capital land was there, and what high wages were to be got, and how much farming men were wanted, and particularly ploughmen, and how you were sure to make your fortune there quite out of hand like. Well, if ever I longed for anything in my life, it was to have a bit of land of

my own, but I never could get hold of it anyhow, nor saw any likelihood of it. So, in short, I was seized with a sort of fit to go to Van Diemen's Land, and go I would, spite of what master could say. I had saved a matter o' 'bout a hundred and fifty pounds, and so go I did, and now I'll go back again."

I was a little damped to hear this talk from a real farming man, and one, too, who had seen a good deal of the country, and I began to have misgivings of the prudence of what I had done in leaving a rich and settled country like England, for a new and wild region such as Van Diemen's Land. My new acquaintance seemed rather of a dull and obstinate nature, like most farming men in the middle counties of England, and was likely enough to be prejudiced against the country after the mauling the bushrangers had given him; but still I thought he could tell me what he had seen; so, as he seemed inclined to talk, I went on to question him for the sake of information.

"What system of farming," said I, "do they follow most in this country?"

"System? Bless you, you don't suppose they follow any system here. The way they go on is quite disgusting to me; they know no more of farming than a Londoner. They don't know how to grow anything."

"No wheat?"

"Yes, they do grow wheat—such as it is."

"Oats?"

"Not seen much oats; however, I believe they can grow."

"Potatoes?"

"Oh, plenty of potatoes."

"Vegetables?—cabbages, peas, beans, and such like?"

"Yes; I can't say but they can grow 'em; but they're too large to please me, and I'm sure they grow too quick; besides, it stands to reason that things can't grow properly with the soil just disturbed, as it's done here. A man in my country would be ashamed to call it digging. And then to see what they call a field of wheat! I call it a field of stumps! And where there's no stumps they don't do much better. They just put the plough once through it, and there lies the sod turned up with the grass growing on it; and then a weaver chap, or a London weed, comes with the seed in a bag, and oh, my eyes, how I laughed! He flings it about as if he was feeding the chickens; and then another chap comes with a large branch of a tree, drawn by a couple of oxen, and he sweeps the grain about, and that they call harrowing! and when that's done they just leave it."



"And what becomes of it?"

"Oh, first the cockatoos get a good bellyful, and then the parrots and magpies have a peck at it. But it comes up at last."

"Well, that's something."

"Yes—maybe—but it oughtn't to come up done in that slovenly way. It's a shame to waste good seed so. And then when they *do* get a bit of land a little—no, not in order—but out of disorder, how do they work it, dear me! What do you think a sort of cockney chap said to me at Pitt-water, for I've been over there? Says I to him, 'Friend,' says I, 'how often do you let your land lie fallow in these parts?' 'Fallow,' says he, 'what's that?' 'You're a pretty chap to be a farmer,' said I, 'not to know what lying fallow means. Why lying fallow means letting the land rest a bit to recover itself for another crop.' 'Oh,' said he, 'our land in this place never lies "fallow," as you call it! we just put the same crop in every year. There—that field has grown wheat for eleven years.' 'What, have you had the cruelty,' said I, 'to put wheat on that bit of land for eleven years?' 'To be sure I have,' said he, 'and shall grow wheat on it for eleven years longer, if I live.' Master, you might have knocked me down with a feather: I never before heard anything so horrid. I felt sure at once that no good was to be done in a country where creatures harrow with branches of trees, and treat their land so cruelly. But it was worse than that when I came to look more into it. I know you won't believe it; they'll never believe it of me when I get back to Shropshire. This very bit of land, that I've told you of, that the creature grew corn on for eleven years without stopping, never had—no—not so much as a handful of manure the whole eleven year! What do you think of that? Would any Christian farmer in England treat his land so? Why, it's against nature!"

I now began to understand the sort of man I had to deal with; one of those obstinate sons of the soil who cannot be made to understand that it is possible to carry on farming in any other way than the way which they have been accustomed to; and whose prejudices against innovation are so strong, that they will not believe in the truth of what they see with their own eyes, and wring everything from its true bearing to the backing up of their own notions. Now that I felt at ease with my new friend, I began to be amused with his oddity and obstinacy, and I thought perhaps, as he had had some experience in the colony, and knew the country, he would be a useful companion to me, though not very prepossessing in his personal appearance.

"Well, Mr. Crab," said I, "what do you mean to do now?"

"Oh, I shall make the best of my way on board ship, and get out of this miserable country as fast as I can."

"But to my certain knowledge no ship will sail for six weeks; what would you do in the town all that time?"

"Ah—there's another horrid thing against the country; when a poor man has been enticed over by all the lies of the captains and shipowners, and book-writers, here he must stay till some captain gets as sick of the country as he. What's to become of me for six weeks I'm sure I don't know! To live in that wretched town is horrible, where all the people are convicts, or worse than convicts, with their wickedness and extortions. Only once did I go into a public-house while I was there."

"And how did you fare there?"

"Oh! I'll tell you: 'Glass of beer,' said I. 'Nothing under a bottle,' said the landlord. 'How much does your bottle hold?' said I; for I knew it was necessary to be cautious in dealing with these town chaps. 'Just the same as in England,' said he, showing a bottle with Barclay's bottled stout marked on the label. It's true—my heart did warm to the beer, and quite forgetting to ask the price I said, with a sort of glee, 'Out with the cork.' It was out in a twinkling; that drink was a prime one, I must say, if I never have another. 'Take a glass yourself, landlord,' said I. 'With pleasure,' said he, and filling it slowly to the brim, 'Your very good health,' said he to me. 'The same to you,' said I, filling another. He filled his at the same time, without waiting to be invited. 'How do you like it?' said he. 'Never drunk better in my life,' said I; 'What's to pay?' 'Half-a-guinea,' said he. 'Half-a-guinea,' said I, 'for a bottle of beer!' 'Yes,' said he, 'and cheap too; there's only two dozen left in the colony, and you've just drunk one of them.' The beer seemed to move in my stomach at this charge, as if it had got down there by mistake and wanted to come up again. I said nothing! I couldn't speak; I felt I was done. Had I paid the money in their paper shillings and sixpences it might have taken off the edge of the mishap a bit. But I laid down two silver dollars. The landlord took 'em up. 'Another sixpence,' said he. I pulled out another silver dollar, he gave me some dirty bits of paper for the four-and-sixpence change, and I made a vow that if ever I had the opportunity I'd serve him out for it. But that's nothing to what I have suffered in this abominable country, which is fit for nothing but convicts and kangaroos to live in."



"Seeing how ill you've been treated in the town," said I, "and it seems that the bushrangers have not treated you much better in the country, I hardly know what to say to you. I'm going up the country to look for land, but sadly in want of some intelligent person to advise me how to proceed. It is difficult to get sincere information, I fear, from people already settled, all being interested in advising you to take land either near them or far from them as the case may happen to suit them. It is a difficult matter for a stranger to know what to do."

"You're a farmer, I take it, by your look?" said Mr. Crab, inquiringly.

"I can't pretend to be a farmer like you," said I, "because I am sure you're a thorough-bred one, but I know something about it."

"That's very properly said," replied Mr. Crab. "Well—I don't know master,—may I ask your name?"

"Thornley," said I; "William Thornley, late of Croydon, in Surrey; some good farming there."

"Why, for London farming, perhaps, there may be; but you Londoners can't be supposed to understand farming like us in Shropshire. However, master, I'm thinking, that if you like it, I'll go with you over the country a bit; and perhaps I shall be able to persuade you not to stay in this villainous place, but go back to the old country, where people farm their land like Christians. I suppose you don't mistrust me?"

"Not a bit," said I. "There's honesty in your face; so now, if you have rested long enough, let us be moving."

"Come along, then," said Mr. Crab, "and I can show you a way through the bush, where, although rougher than the road, we shall be screened from the rays of the sun."

One soon gets acquainted with one's fellows in the bush where there is not much picking and choosing of companions, and I and my grumbling friend soon got pretty well used to each other. We strolled on leisurely, remaining companions as far as New Norfolk. Here at a little public-house, newly set up, I heard of a tract of country lying westward, on the banks of the Clyde, particularly suitable for cattle and sheep feeding, which was the line I had a mind to follow. I crossed over, still with the persevering Crab, and lighted on a spot which pleased me at once, from the back run for sheep and cattle which it afforded.

Having fixed on my land, I hastened back to Hobart Town, that I might be the first to apply for it. I had been

away seventeen days, and it was with not a little delight that I saw my wife and children again, for I seemed to have been absent a much longer time. The very next day I got an order from the Governor to take possession; and I was informed the land would be regularly surveyed and marked out for me by the Government surveyor, as soon as his engagements would permit, and that in the meantime I might take possession, and erect my buildings. My next care was to provide myself with two bullock-carts, and two teams of four bullocks each to carry up such utensils and things as were absolutely necessary.

On consulting with my wife, I found that she preferred going on the land with me at once, with the children, to staying in the town until I had got some accommodation for her. Fortunately we had brought out with us two good tents, one a pretty large one; these served us in good stead. We were in a pretty bustle, it may be supposed, packing up and getting ready for our journey. It was about fifty miles from the town to the spot I had chosen. All our goods and traps being ready—and having had assigned to me two Government men, a bullock-driver, and a farming-man—my wife, her children, and her mother occupying one cart, with the woman-servant, and all sorts of articles for bedding and use; and the other cart being filled with utensils and tools, and provisions, we commenced our journey on the 26th February, with anxious thoughts, but full of spirits and of hope, for the River Clyde.

### CHAPTER III.

#### JOURNEY UP THE COUNTRY.

THE whole scene is present to me as if it was an affair of yesterday; and I remember well my sensations at the sight of my wife perched on the top of a feather bed in a bullock-cart, with her old mother sitting beside her, and the children higgledy-piggledy about her, enjoying the novelty and the fun of being dragged by bullocks in a cart. There was something so droll in the set out, and at the same time the occasion was so serious, that my poor wife did not know whether to laugh or to cry; but the tumblings that the roughness of the road gave the children soon made them merry enough, and their joyous mirth set the rest of the party a-laughing, so that the journey was a merry one—in the beginning at least. The old lady sat very quietly in her



place, a little frightened, but resigned to her fate. She owned, afterwards, that she never expected to get to the end of the journey alive by such an outlandish sort of conveyance, and she was like to be right in her forebodings at one time.

We got on very well till we arrived at the ferry, for many many years known as Stocker's Ferry, about nine miles from Camp. The bullocks behaved admirably. These were all fine animals. I gave forty pounds a pair for two pair. The other two pair I got for thirty-five pounds a pair; but one of the bullocks was rather old and weak, though a steady worker, and a prime fellow to break in the young ones; it seemed to me he took a pleasure in it. Bob, who lived with me for many years afterwards, had the honour of conducting the principal team, the first cart being committed to the care of my other servant. I walked, helping the one or the other, as the occasion happened, with Will, my eldest boy, now nearly ten years old, for my companion. We had not gone more than a mile from the town, when we heard some one calling after us, and who should it be but Crab, who joined us, terribly out of breath, and with an uncertain expression of countenance which represented an odd appearance of habitual sourness and present concern, which induced me to stop the whole cavalcade for a moment, wondering what could be the matter.

"Well, Mr. Crab," said I, "nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Nothing wrong yet that I see," said Crab; "but I'm thinking, master," said he, hesitatingly, "you're rather short-handed for what you're about. You see, when one of the bullock-carts turns over, you'll hardly be strong enough to set it on its legs again."

"Oh, gracious! Mr. Crab," said my wife, "don't make things worse than they are; you will always look on the worst side so."

"Why, ma'am," said Crab, trying to look gracious, "I don't like to frighten the ladies! but it's always best to be prepared for what's to happen, then when it comes it isn't so bad. So I thought I might be able to help you a bit, as I'm used to the ways of the country, and see you safe on your land; and I don't doubt that when you get there, you'll be glad enough to get back again: and then it would be a consolation to me to see you safe in the town again, and aboard ship, so that you may go away home from this horrible place, which it's a shame to entice people to—poor, deceived, wretched, miserable creatures! Besides, I've taken a sort of liking to your good man here, and the long and the short of it is, if you like, I'll go along with you to your land, and lend

you a help, for you'll want it bad enough. What do you say to it, master?"

There was a real good and honest feeling in the man, which, in spite of the rough husk that covered it, had given me a liking for him, and I readily agreed to his proposal; telling him that I was heartily glad of such a valuable addition to our company. He gave a nod, to intimate that he considered the social compact as concluded, and then eagerly relapsed into his accustomed sourness and sarcasm. He immediately began to complain of the state of the roads—of their ruts and unevenness.

"Did ever mortal man," said he, "conceive the stupidity of these road-makers? Here they take you right over the hill, when it would have been no further, and much easier, to go round it. But no—the road must be carried in a straight line, and so the poor cattle must be murdered in dragging their loads over it. And then look at the stumps of trees left in the middle of the road. A nice place, isn't it, for a gentleman to travel in?"

"But you can't expect," said I, "to find things in a new country all ready made to your hand; there must be a beginning to everything."

"Then why do you come to a new country? Why can't you wait till it's an old one, and fit for Christians to live in? Not that this place will be ever fit for anything to live in but a convict or a kangaroo."

By this time we had arrived at Stocker's Ferry.

"What do you intend to do now?" said Crab.

"Cross the ferry."

"How?"

"How! why, in the ferry boat, to be sure."

"You'll be capsized—bullocks, carts, and all."

"We must take our chance of that."

After a good deal of trouble, we crossed over safe.

"Well, Crab, that job's done well," said I.

"Better the other way, and so saved worse," said Crab; "but, however, as we are on this side, Heaven help us! we had better get on to where there is water for the bullocks, for they begin to be distressed in the heat of the day. They'll never be able to get these loads to the end of the journey; that's my opinion."

With these pleasing prognostications as an accompaniment to our toil, we reached Brighton Plains, where we made a halt, in a sheltered spot, by the side of a little stream, and let loose the bullocks to graze. Crab assured us that we might make up our minds to stay where we were for some



weeks, or days at least, as the bullocks would be sure to stray away into the bush.

We laughed at his talk; and the children, glad to be released from the confinement of the cart, made the little valley ring with their shrieks and their merriment. My wife was as merry as any of them; and the old lady was pleased to have proceeded so far, and to have accomplished the much-dreaded crossing of the river without accident. I thought even the furrows of Crab's rugged features once or twice nearly relaxed into a smile, as he witnessed the frolicsome mirth of the children, but he shook his head with much gravity. "Ah," said he, "poor things! let them enjoy themselves; they little know what's in store for 'em."

We now called a council of war, and it was determined to wait till the cool of the evening, and then make a vigorous push for the Green Ponds, where a little public-house had been recently established. We arrived there just at dark; and as the house was small, and the night fine and warm, we preferred passing the night under our tents, which were quickly set up. We secured the bullocks in a small stock-yard, close by the little inn; and, with the exception of Crab, the whole party was soon fast asleep. That indefatigable individual insisted that we should be attacked by the bush-rangers; and he remained, therefore, on watch to give the alarm.

Nothing occurred, however; and by four o'clock in the morning, we were all a-foot, and ready to start. We proceeded in due order for about four miles on the high road. We had then to turn to the left, westward, on our way to the place of our destination. Crossing the narrow River Jordan at an awkward ford, which would have been of difficult accomplishment at any other than the summer season, we continued our way with much precaution, as there was no marked road, and the track was not always plain.

After a few miles progress, we arrived at the foot of the Den Hill, part of a ridge of mountainous hills, extending to the left. On the right was a smiling valley, watered by a little stream. The appearance of the ascent before us was very formidable; it is not very much better now; but at that time the country was little known, and an untravelled road always appears the first time longer and worse than it is. Here we made another halt, to gather up courage to face the ascent, and to recruit the strength of the cattle and their drivers. Crab looked at the hill covered with a thick mass of trees, and without any visible opening, and then at the carts and bullocks, with a very long face. I confess I had

some misgivings myself. I had gone over the hill before, when I went to look at the land at the Clyde ; but going over such a hill on foot and surmounting it with laden carts are two very different things.

As we discussed some bread and meat on the grass, we were all very serious, even the children regarding the black dense mass of trees rising one above another before us with fearfulness and perplexity. We turned to Crab instinctively, expecting to hear from him some of his usual evil prognostications. But he preserved a rigid silence, stuffing huge pieces of damper into his mouth, with a diligence and perseverance that seemed to imply he was doubtful when he might have the chance of doing so again, and enjoying maliciously, I was inclined to think, the novel disappointment of his unusual taciturnity.

At last, seeing that the thing must be done, I shook off the lethargic feeling which fatigue, the heat, and apparently insurmountable difficulties before us, had cast over me, and I braced myself up for the effort. We got on pretty well for about a quarter of a mile, but the steepness of the way and the impediments of the dead timber, lying on all sides about, brought us to a standstill. Putting pieces of wood behind the wheels of the carts, to prevent their rolling backwards, we looked inquiringly at one another. It seemed a hopeless task. Crab said nothing. The men looked at the bullocks despairingly.

"It's more than mortal cattle can do," said Bob, who had shown himself a civil and diligent fellow ; "you might as well attempt to climb up the walls of a house."

I thought so too, but I took care to keep my thoughts to myself. I was puzzled to know what to do ; and the evening was drawing in, and the clear light failing us, though at that time of the year the nights are never quite dark in Van Diemen's Land. In this difficulty my wife came to our aid.

"If four bullocks cannot draw one cart up the hill, why not put the whole eight on, and draw one cart up at a time ?"

It was like Columbus's egg ; nothing more easy when it was done. In a trice we unharnessed the provision cart, Crab lending himself with alacrity and energy to the movement ; and with prodigious labour, and the exhaustion of the whole party, we succeeded, after two hours' work, in dragging the cart, with my wife and children, to the summit of this terrible hill. It was now nearly dark, and we had left the provision-cart about a mile behind us, and the animals were



too much exhausted to render further attempts possible. Under these circumstances, we were obliged to pass the night, as it were, under arms, with the bullocks yoked and chained, for we were afraid to let them wander to feed, not knowing the country. Crab volunteered to mount guard over the cart below, and to keep up a good fire to point out his whereabouts. We did the same; and in this way we passed the night, not very commodiously; but the genial warmth of the season, and the brilliant fineness of the night, reconciled us to our rough lodgment, and as we had plenty of covering for the children, they slept soundly, and all passed off well.

At the first sign of light we were stirring. We had to pursue the same process to get up our provision-cart, when we made a hearty breakfast, and not the less so from having gone without our supper. Our way was now all down-hill by a gentle inclination; and sometimes following the faint track, and sometimes guided by the notched trees, and making our way over the dead timber and through the bushes as well as we could, we arrived in about a couple of hours at the site of my future farm.

It was now noon. The sun was intensely hot, and we very tired, bullocks and all; but we had arrived safe, and we felt in spirits. And here we were, our little party, alone in the wilderness. To the west there was no human habitation between us and the sea; and the nearest settler's residence was not less than eighteen miles. There was pasturage for sheep and cattle for scores and scores of miles, and no one to interfere with them. But I had not yet a single sheep, nor a single head of cattle, except my eight working bullocks. We turned them out to graze on the plain before us, through which ran the Clyde, then better known by the name of the Fat Doe River; we had no fear of their straying, for they were tired enough with their journey. The two men then set up the tents without bidding.

I remember I sat on a fallen tree, with my wife and children and her mother stretched on the ground in the shade, for some time absorbed in thoughts of mingled pain and pleasure. Crab had strolled into the bush. It was a brilliant day. There was a solemn stillness around that was imposing; the sun shining gloriously in the heavens, and the prospect around most calm and beautiful. I felt melancholy. Thoughts crowded thick upon me. I had undertaken a vast task to establish a home in the wilderness. The first stage of my enterprise I had accomplished, through toil and labour, and difficulty and danger; but I had accomplished it. The first

object was gained. I had reached the land of promise. I had taken possession of my land, and a noble domain it was. But what were the risks and difficulties that remained? I felt fearful at the work before me. No help near in case of danger; no medical assistance; no neighbour. I looked at my wife and children lying listlessly on the dry and parched grass; I looked around me, and tried to penetrate into the obscurity of the future and guess the end. Worn out with thought, and weary with travel, I insensibly gave way to the feeling of lassitude which possessed us all, and fell asleep on the grass. My wife would not have me wakened, but, taking on herself without hesitation and without delay the duties of a settler's wife, she silently gave directions for unloading the carts, and preparing our canvas house. The smaller tent she made the temporary storehouse for our multifarious goods; the larger one was converted into a general bedchamber for herself, her mother, and the children. The store tent was destined for me to sleep in. Two boxes formed a table on the outside, and fitting logs of wood formed appropriate seats. A fire was kindled near the spot, and dinner got ready. It was quite an early settler's meal—boiled salt pork and damper, with tea and brown sugar, and rice for the children. All this was prepared while I slept. I was awakened by Crab, who had been absent about a couple of hours on his exploring expedition.

"Holloa!" said he; "here's a pretty settler, to go to sleep while his wife works for him. Look here, I've got something for you."

I awoke at this, and felt quite refreshed and ready for action. Crab displayed a brace of wild ducks, which produced a general curiosity among the party. Without stopping to ask questions, Crab prepared them for the spit after his way. But spit we had none, so we contented ourselves with throwing them on the hot embers, native fashion, and hooking them out with the ramrod of one of our muskets. We distributed them among young and old in equitable proportions. I had brought up with me a five-gallon cask of rum, rather in compliance with the customs of the colony than with my own inclination; but on this occasion, and to do honour to the splendour of our repast of game, I served out a moderate ration of it, much to the satisfaction of the two men, who were well pleased at the unexpected libation. We soon got very merry, and at last felt so reconciled to our new position, that I caught myself proposing three-times-three to the success of the FIRST FARM on the Fat Doe River.

And now, having rested and refreshed, we all began to



bestir ourselves in earnest to our work. My eldest boy, Will, was set to watch the bullocks, to prevent their straying too far. The men busied themselves in erecting a sod hut for themselves about a hundred yards from the tents. Crab got out the grindstone, fixed it on a convenient stump of a fallen tree, and prepared the axes. My first care was to put our fire-arms in order, and handy for use. I had two muskets with bayonets, a fowling-piece, and two pair of pistols, one a large pair of horse-pistols; I had besides a yeomanry broadsword and a hanger, so that we were tolerably well armed. Crab looked grim at my warlike preparations.

"Ah!" said he, "a pretty way of taking possession of a farm, with guns and blunderbusses, instead of ploughs and harrows. Well, to be sure; the madness of the people to come to such a place as this to fight with the natives and the bushrangers. However, as you are here, I suppose something must be done to get a roof over your heads. I have found some capital timber not a quarter-of-a-mile off, that would do to build a log-house. You'll find that the best thing you can do is to house yourself comfortably;—comfortably! yes, pretty comfort there is in the bush! we look very comfortable, don't we? all alone in the wilderness, without a soul near us to help us, and not a drop of beer to be had for love or money. Well, as you have made your bed, you must lie on it. You are in for it for a while, and so I suppose you must make the best of it."

With these appropriate and gratifying observations, the cross-grained but diligent Crab furnished himself with the heaviest axe of the lot, and we went together to the verge of the forest; our encampment having been formed on a piece of ground nearly clear of timber. We eyed some hard-looking gum-trees for a little time, pausing to select those most fit for our purpose.

"Now," said Crab, "who is to strike the first stroke?"

"That will I do," said I, and fetching a blow at a gum-tree before me, stuck my axe in the bark.

"Well done for a beginning," said Crab; "here goes for another."

At this he struck a sturdy stroke on the other side of the tree, but without producing much impression.

"Hard stuff this," said Crab. "I'm thinking we have harder work before us than we thought for! I wonder how long it will take you and me to cut down this tree? But let us at him again."

We chopped and chopped, and sweated and worked, till we were fairly exhausted; we made a pretty decent gap on

both sides, but the tree gave no intimation of coming down.

"This will never do," said I; "there must be something wrong here; we must not be all day cutting down one tree."

Casting my eye on the axes that lay on the ground, it occurred to me that the fault was in the tools. We had made use of heavy, broad axes, which after-experience taught us were quite unfit for felling timber.

"There's something wrong with these axes," said I; "let's try the axes which I bought in Camp."

They were much longer from heel to edge, and much narrower, presenting not more than half the breadth of edge to the wood. The first cut showed their superiority.

"This is the article," said Crab; and with that he gave a flourish with his axe in the air, and shivered off a prodigious slice of the obstinate gum-tree. We went at it merrily, and presently the tree began to shiver, and suddenly it fell down with a prodigious crash to the ground.

"That's number one," said Crab, "and precious hard work it is, I must say. And this is what we have come to t'other side of the earth for! to cut down gum-trees! A nice employment for middle-aged gentlemen, I must say. I'm thinking we might have had enough of this pleasure at home, without coming so far for it. However, every one to his mind. And now for the next, master. Here is a good-looking chap; let's have a chop at him."

"Let us try the saw," said I; "it's ready set; perhaps that will do it easier."

"Any way," said Crab, "so long as we're amused. I take it, in about six months, at this rate, we shall be able to get timber enough for a hut. But here's a nice breeze got up. Oh, this is what they call the sea-breeze that comes in the afternoon; but sure we are too far from the sea to feel it."

"Well, never mind where it comes from; it's too pleasant to be asked questions about. Upon my word, I thought it was rather warmish."

The wind now rose so as to bend the branches of the trees, and its grateful coolness was unspeakably refreshing after the sultry heat of the day. I saw the tents agitated by it, and the loose things on the grass dancing about, and the children merrily chasing them. But I found the breeze more than pleasing; it was a useful help in felling the trees, and we quickly took advantage of it. Cutting the side of the tree next to the breeze, we found that the force of the wind saved us half our labour, for the branches being full and thick in leaf, they presented such a hold to the wind that a slight



notching of them brought them down. In this way we felled eight trees, and gave the appearance of a little clearing to that spot.

In the meantime the evening was drawing in, and the shades of night soon fell on us. The men had raised the walls of their sod hut, and, covering it over with branches of trees, they were content for the night. The bullocks showed no disposition to stray; so after seeing all things put in order, as well as the circumstances permitted, we disposed ourselves for rest. Crab insisted on keeping watch with musket and fixed bayonet; and, with a cartridge-box slung behind him, he made a most formidable figure.

All was still; the stars were bright in the heavens, and I could distinguish the faint outlines of the distant hills. It was long before I could compose myself to sleep. I was full of thought and anxiety. But the very peril of my position served at last to nerve me up to the encounter. I felt the deep responsibility of my position as the father of a young family and the husband of an affectionate wife, who by my act had been conveyed from home, from relations, and from early friends, to brave the risks and adventures of a settler's life.

With the serious thoughts with which this contemplation inspired me, I lay down to rest, not without returning my grateful thanks to the Great Disposer of all events for having arrived thus far with my family in health and safety; and entreating the Divine protection and help in my solitary encampment; with such prayer I addressed myself to sleep to gather strength for the morrow.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A SETTLER'S DAILY LABOURS.

Up at daylight. Set the men to work to cross-cut the trees that we felled yesterday. Crab helped, and they sawed and felled alternately. Crab said it was regular nigger work; when they were tired of chopping down the gum-trees, they had to set to to saw 'em—to rest themselves.

Walked over my land, guessing as well as I could the extent of twelve hundred acres, at the rate of one-third frontage to the river. Fixed on the line where the measurement of my lot should begin. After a good deal of consideration and examination of the parts about, I settled on the

spot for building our log-house. I thought that the time might come when I should be able to erect a better house, so I marked the place for our temporary habitation close to the spot for the future building, and so as to form a part of the general plan. Marked out in my mind a garden and entrance. After this I set to work to help Crab and the men in preparing split-logs for the hut. My wife says that she doesn't like me to call it a "hut;" so, mem., "to call it a COTTAGE." Got twelve more trees down to-day. My eldest boy, Will, who had been watching the working bullocks within sight of the tents, told us at dinner that he had seen a kangaroo, with a young one in her pouch, grazing not far from him. I must get dogs, not only for hunting occasionally, but for safety, to give the alarm at night, and in the day-time too. The weather beautiful. We live in the open air, and it seems to me it would not harm us to sleep in the open air; but we have our tents. No one came near us all day.

At work next day with Crab and the men, sawing the fallen timber into lengths, and splitting it to set up. Crab has been splitting shingles to serve instead of tiles for the roof. Bob said that many huts are thatched with a sort of grass, abundant in all marshy places, and which serves the purpose of straw pretty well; but I don't like the idea of having a combustible roof where you are exposed to fire as well from the natives as from the accidental firing of the dry grass in the summer season; so, although it is more labour and more expense, I have decided against thatch. Had the shingles split ten inches long and four broad. Only cut four more trees.

Got down twenty-eight trees, making in all fifty-two. My wife says we must get some fowls to make a poultry-yard. Will complains that the bullocks want to stray off the ground. Weather beautiful. Saw no creature but ourselves all day.

I could not make up my mind at first what to do, whether to go on with our cottage, which was a pressing want, or to keep the Sunday as a day of rest. Consulted with my wife. She thought it was proper to keep up the distinction of the Sunday for the sake of preserving the good habits of the children. Pondered over the matter a good deal. As to there being any harm in working on a Sunday on such matters as we were engaged I do not think there was; but, as the weather was fine, I thought it best not to disturb Sunday habits. So, after we had read prayers to the children, we passed the day talking, and planning, and strolling among the trees, but not far from the house. And I don't



think there was any time lost, after all; for our day's rest made us the fresher and stronger for Monday's work. As I am upon the subject, I may say here, that in my experience I never knew any harm come to a man's constitution from working the six days of the week as hard as he might, if he rested on the seventh. But I have observed that when a man in his eagerness has worked every day without taking his rest on the seventh, it has worn him out, and that he has become used up much sooner than the man who rested one day in the week. And this remark holds good, as I have had occasion to know, with those who work with their heads as well as with those who work with their hands. Saw no one all day. No Sunday visitors here.

Chop, chop, chop, saw, saw, saw. Crab wants to know if I am going to build a town. He says it's a pity to take so much trouble about a thing which I may leave, perhaps, next day. My thoughts are very different.

House to be sixty feet long and sixteen broad, and the logs nine feet out of the ground; to be divided into one large room, twenty feet long; a passage ten feet wide; and on the other side of the passage four rooms, one to be a store-room. At the end of the passage, facing the entrance, a closet for all sorts of things. At the back of the long room of twenty feet, a kitchen, &c.

When I showed the plan to Crab, he said, "I should never live to finish it; however, I might go on building it till I left, and he would not baulk my humour if I had a fancy for it."

The cottage soon presented a respectable appearance. Shingled it over as far as the long room, then stopped for want of shingle nails. We had not had fresh meat since we got on the land, and my wife thought the children were not thriving. Arranged to send the bullock-cart to Camp for a fresh supply of nails and flour, and to bring up as much as it could carry of our goods from the merchant's store—Crab to go, with one man.

We all felt very lonely. We did not lose time, however, but finished odd things about that wanted attending to.

One day I took my gun, to see if I could bring down some ducks to make a fresh meal for the children; for we had been living on the salt pork we had brought up with us. Tried to keep the tents and new building in sight, but was led further than I intended. Came up to a lot of ducks swimming leisurely about at a part of the river that was very deep, with the current not so rapid as in the shallow parts. I was going to have a shot at about twenty of them, when suddenly

a gun was fired into the midst of them, close to me. I was in a terrible fright, the suddenness of the report and its unexpectedness filling me at the same moment with all sorts of fears. My first impulse was to run home to my wife and children; and then the thought occurred that I should be exposed and defenceless that way to be shot at, if there was any one of a mind to do it.

All these thoughts passed through my head in an instant; and, in the meanwhile, the man who had fired the shot advanced rapidly through the shrubs after his game. As he came on, his eyes lighted on me with my gun cocked and pointed towards him. I saw at once by his manner that he was as much frightened at me as I was at him. The Fat Doe River at this place is about forty feet across; he was on the other side. There we stood for a little while, he stopping and gaping, and I standing with my piece in the position to fire. How long we should have remained in these positions, each in fear of the other, I can't pretend to say; but the suspense ended by a flock of ducks that came flying between us, just over our heads. The ducks were so close, they looked so plump as I stood under them, and I wanted them so much, that I could not resist the temptation. By a sort of instinct, for I was always fond of sporting, I raised up my piece, and, forgetting my usual caution, I let fly at them. Down came three.

"Well done!" cried out the stranger; "I see there's no harm in you, or you would not have flung your fire away that way; but you will lose your ducks, if you don't mind; there are two in the water sailing down the stream."

I soon found a long rod, with which I secured my birds; and the stranger going further down the stream, recovered the fur which he had shot before me.

"I suppose you took me for a bushranger?" bawled I, speaking to him as he was standing and holding his wet ducks by the legs, on the other side of the narrow stream.

"I did not like the looks of you, as you stood with your gun pointed at me as you did; that's just the way of 'em. I suppose you're looking for land?"

"I have found my land, and I'm on it, not a quarter of a mile from here. What are you doing?"

"I have got charge of a stock-yard, about fifteen miles off, and I'm going my rounds to see how the cattle lie."

"Cattle! I wish I had known there were cattle hereabouts; I should have been glad of some of the fresh meat. I've seen none near us. But, to be sure, I have never left my tents



before to-day, to go as far as this even. But we can talk as we go home; they are waiting for me, and glad enough will they be at what I am bringing them."

With this we proceeded homewards, till we came to the part of the stream where a tree had fallen across, which served as a bridge for the stock-keeper to come over to me. When we got to the tents, he went, as a matter of course, to the men's sod-hut, where Bob did the honours; this relieved me from a little embarrassment, for I did not know on what footing to treat the stock-keeper. After a while Bob appeared with the stranger's four ducks, saying that he would be glad of salt pork instead, as it would be a treat to him. The stock-keeper slept in Bob's hut. I found that he had two kangaroo dogs for sale, a dog and a bitch—asked twelve dollars each for them. Thought it a large sum, but, after some explanation, agreed to give it.

I tried my hand with Bob at making a table. Took some of the cleanest of the split logs, and splitting them again, contrived, by smoothing them with the axe and planing them where possible, to produce a tolerably even surface. It was six feet long and four wide. My wife praised my ingenuity, and her mother declared it was a splendid piece of furniture. The children were very merry at it, and Betsy, my eldest girl, who was christened after her grandmother, covered it with an old green cloth that had served to pack things in, which gave it quite a genteel look.

We were all a-bed and asleep, when we were awakened by a prodigious cracking of whips and sounds of voices in the distance. We were agreeably surprised by the arrival of the bullock-cart, with Crab and the man, bearing fresh supplies and additions to our stores, for we did not expect him till next day. Sunday passed as usual.

Crab said he had seen a fine lot of sheep—one hundred and eighty ewes with their lambs, and forty wethers, to be had cheap for money, near the Green Ponds. Thought of the sheep all night, but could not plan how to keep them without another servant; but found that John Bond, one of my Government men, had been used to sheep in England. Determined to have a look at the sheep next day, but very reluctant to leave home.

Crab and Bob set to work to complete the shingling of the cottage. Seeing the importance of beginning to get stock about me, and of taking advantage of cheap sales, I started off at daylight with John Bond to the Green Ponds. Arrived there at mid-day; examined the sheep, bought the whole lot at ten shillings and sixpence a head, that is, reckoning the ewe

and lamb as one. The lambs are about five months old. This comes to four hundred and sixty-two dollars, dollars passing for five shillings which cost me four shillings and fourpence in London.

They were large carcassed sheep, partaking more of the Leicestershire breed than any other; their wool far from fine but not positively coarse. These one hundred and eighty ewes formed the basis of my future flocks, of the rise of which I shall have to speak in the proper place. I paid for the sheep by an order for so much money in Camp. When I had bought them, the next thing was how to get them home. I and my man drove them to the foot of the Den Hill that evening, and then, letting them feed in the valley, they rested quietly where they were when the day closed.

We kept watch and watch all night. About the middle of the night the sheep became very restless, and I wondered what was the matter, and was easily alarmed, being in constant apprehension of bushrangers and natives. I had my gun ready, and listened attentively; I could hear nothing but my man snoring. Presently I thought I heard a sort of snuffing, as of some animal, and peering through the dark, I thought I saw an outline different from that of a sheep, and standing by itself. I knew there were no wild animals in the country that would attack man, but I felt a little queerish at the appearance of the shadowy form of a creature which I took to be the native dog, as I had heard it called in Camp. I was curious to know what it was, and, prompted by that feeling of using the gun which grows with one in the bush, I fired. The whole flock roused up at this, and my man awoke directly. I told him what I had done, and when he had settled the sheep down again, we went to the spot, and found an animal killed and warm.

When the daylight came, I found I had killed a sort of animal peculiar to the country, as all animals are in Van Diemen's Land. It was more like a large wild dog or jackal than anything else; about the size of a Newfoundland dog, but not so thick and heavy; of a brownish colour, and partly striped and partly spotted like a leopard. It was a female, and possessed the peculiarity attached to all animals of New South Wales, of the false belly or pouch for containing the young one. I was not naturalist enough to make out to what description of animal the creature belonged, but my friend, Mr. Moss, who settled near me some years after, has told me since, that the animal is of the canine genus, and of a species before unknown. My man skinned it for me, and when we got home Betsy covered the stump of a gum-tree



with it, and being elegantly stuffed with dry grass, it formed a seat of honour for my wife.

We lost no time in getting the sheep over the long hill, and then, letting them travel leisurely, we reached home with them before noon.

There was a fine stir about the tents when the sheep came in sight. We were welcomed by my wife and her mother and the children in a body. Even Crab seemed pleased.

"Well," said he, "here's more company, at any rate. You must look sharp after them, or not a tail will you see to-morrow morning. The sheep in this country are dreadful creatures to stray. And no wonder, poor things! they naturally try to find some grass fit to eat, which they never do, and that makes 'em eternally wandering about. We shall have a pretty job to brand 'em. When do you mean to mark 'em."

"Why," said I, "I must do it as well as I can, for I have no marking-irons."

"No marking-irons! Here's a mess! We must make another journey to town. Only think of travelling fifty or sixty miles, and the same back, after marking-irons, or any little thing that may be wanted. Why, there isn't a blacksmith nearer than Camp! Well, I suppose we must make another trip?"

"And no great harm in that," said I; "I don't see the use of putting the plough in the ground yet; it's too late and too early, so we had better take advantage of the leisure, and cart everything up that must be carted."

"Why, you never mean to drag all your goods up here, when you're sure to have to drag them all back again?" said Crab; "for as to staying here, that's out of all question. You'll soon have a visit from the bushrangers when they smell out there is something to be got; or else the natives will call on you in a friendly way, and make a bonfire of your new house; or else—you'll make a bonfire of it yourself, when you come to be sick of the whole affair, as you soon will."

"We shall see," said I. And so it was settled that the cart should go down next day with Crab and Bob, as we should want the other man to mind the sheep. We turned our little flock into the meadow, where we could see for a mile before us, with only trees enough to make the place look pleasing, like a gentleman's park in England.

The stock-keeper came this afternoon with the two kangaroo dogs, Hector and Fly; I found they were the very same dogs I had met with at New Norfolk. They soon got used to us.

Crab went to Camp, in March, with Bob and one of the carts and four bullocks. The stock-keeper stayed with us to lend a hand to finish the shingling; but my boy was mad to take the dogs out after a kangaroo, and the stock-keeper promised to go with him and show him the sport next morning.

Having finished the shingling all but the scullery, I was puzzled about the chimney, which I had planned to be at one end. Searched about near the house, for I did not like to go far, after lime, but could not see anything that looked like it. Found a nice bit of clay that I thought would do for plastering. Got John Bond to help me a bit, while the sheep were in sight, to saw some trees into blocks for seats; contrived to cut six; but this sawing is hard work. The sheep seem to take kindly to the place, but the feed is beginning to be scanty. The flat, I am inclined to think, is overflowed some time in the year, by the look of some water-furrows. Came on a capital stone quarry about a quarter of a mile from the tents, with some monstrous black ants crawling about. Saw a snake to-day for the first time on my land; I had seen many in my walks over the country, but I had not seen one before at the Fat Doe River. It was quite black, about four feet long, and was an ugly-looking thing; it glided away very quickly through the long, sedgy grass, and seemed to be as much afraid of me as I was of it. I did not think to shoot it till it was out of sight.

Coming home I spied four black cockatoos chattering in a bush hard by. I fired and killed one. It was curious to see how the others wondered and fluttered about the dead bird, as if they could not make out what harm had come to it. I fired again and killed two, and then shot the remaining one, which had not shown any inclination to fly away.

I have thought since that there was something like cruelty in what I did; it was like slaughtering them in cold blood, in their ignorance and innocence, they never having heard the report of a gun before, and being unresisting and not knowing the necessity of fleeing from man and his engines of destruction. However, these thoughts did not trouble me at the moment. I took the birds home and gave them to my wife to make a pie of. The children laughed at the idea of black cockatoo pie, and they all said it was a pity to kill such pretty birds; but we ate the pie nevertheless with a good deal of relish, and I thought it a very prime one. Killed a wether in the evening; it weighed forty-eight pounds, sinking the offal; it was about twenty months old.

Just after dark, Will came home with his new friend, the



stock-keeper, tired enough, and he soon made an end of the remains of the cockatoo-pie. He brought with him the tail of an immense kangaroo as a trophy, while the stock-keeper bore on his shoulders the hind-quarters of another, holding the two hind-legs before him, while the tail was hanging down his back nearly to the ground. I asked what they had done with the kangaroo that Will's tail belonged to, and they said they had left the fore-quarters on the ground, and that they had hoisted up the hind-quarters and the skins on a tree, some six or seven miles from the tents. I thought this a sad waste, but it was the general custom in those times. The women then busied themselves in cooking part of the venison for supper, under the instructions of the stock-keeper, who was an experienced epicure in kangaroo cookery. The tenderest parts, and those most free from the tendons and fibres with which the flesh of the kangaroo abounds, were carefully cut out, and chopped up fine; some slices of salt pork were added to this, and the whole put to steam slowly over the fire.

This national dish of the Van Diemen's Land bush is called a "steamer." I think I never ate anything so delicious; we all had a hearty stuff, and the old lady insisted on having the rum introduced, to celebrate, as she said, Will's first exploit of hunting. The tail was left on the fire in a *Papin's digester*, to make soup for the next day. The soup was better even than the steamer; but I must not anticipate. As we sat round the fire on our logs of wood, enjoying ourselves after the bush fashion, I sitting, as my custom was at that time, with my gun over my arm, for fear of surprises, but feeling more safe since the arrival of the dogs, which in this country act not only as hounds for hunting, but as capital watch-dogs, the ladies were curious to know how Will had contrived to catch the kangaroos, and what sort of sport it was. Will was very tired, but the cockatoo-pie and the steamer had refreshed him, and he soon fired up at the recollection of the sport, and told us what had happened to him.

## CHAPTER V.

### A KANGAROO HUNT.

It was just light (said my son Will) when the stock-keeper called me, and I wasn't long dressing. I took one of the large pistols that father said I might have, and the stock-keeper had a musket, and we had half a damper and a paper

of salt, and I had my big hack knife, and so off we went. I do think Hector knew he was going to have some kangaroo, for he seemed so glad, and licked his chops, and Fly wagged her tail, and the morning was so beautiful; and what do you think, father, the bird that mother likes to hear so much is a magpie! it is indeed, for I saw it, and it's just like an English magpie, only it sings so beautifully. We walked over the plain till we came to the hills; the dogs kept quiet behind us. The stock-keeper said I might see they had been well trained; they kept their heads low, and their tails hanging down behind them, as if they had no life in them; but you should have seen them when they got sight of a kangaroo, didn't they pluck up! We went on till we got about four or five miles from the tents, and then we did not talk, for the kangaroos are started at the least noise; they are just like hares for that. Then the stock-keeper stood still. He said to the dogs, "Go, find;" and then the dogs cantered round about us, going further and further, till Hector began to smell about very earnestly.

"He has got scent," said the stock-keeper, and so he had, for he galloped off with his nose to the ground, straight ahead. Fly saw him, and she galloped after.

"I think it's a big one," said the stock-keeper, "the dogs seem so warm at it."

I was running after them as fast as I could, when the stock-keeper called after me to stop.

"Stop," said he; "it's no use for you to run, you could not keep up with them."

"Why, what are we to do?" said I; "if they kill a kangaroo, how can we find it?"

"Wait a bit," said he; "all in good time. If the dogs kill a kangaroo we shall find him, I'll warrant."

So we waited and waited till I was quite tired, and a good while after Hector came back quite slowly, as if he was tired, with Fly following after. The stock-keeper looked at his mouth. "What's that for?" said I.

"To see if he has killed," said he; "look here, his mouth is bloody, and that's come by killing a kangaroo, you may be sure of it."

Then the stock-keeper stood up and said to Hector, "Show;" and then Hector trotted off, not fast, but pretty fast, so that I was obliged to trot too to keep up with him; and he trotted on and on till I was rather tired, I daresay for three miles from where we were at first; and on he went and we following him, till he brought us to a dead kangaroo, close to a little pool of water. It was a monstrous big one



with such a claw on each of its hind legs; a claw that would rip up a dog in a moment, or a man too, if he got at him.

"Good dog!" said the stock-keeper, and Hector wagged his tail, and seemed to like to be praised. Then the stock-keeper gave me his gun to hold, and he cut open the kangaroo and gave the inside to the dogs. Then he skinned the upper part down to the loins, and cut the kangaroo in half, and hung it up in a tree, noting the place; the other half he left on the ground; that is, when he went away from the place, for he would not let the dogs have more than a taste of the blood, lest it should spoil their hunting.

"What's to be done now?" said I.

"We'll kill another," said the stock-keeper, "if you are not tired."

I said I was not tired a bit; so, after we had rested a little while, we went on again, the dogs following us as at first. We saw plenty of brush kangaroos, but we would not touch them. After we had got a mile or two, the stock-keeper, who had been examining the ground all the way along, said, "I think there are some big ones hereabouts, by the look of the marks;" so he said to the dog, "Go, find," as he had said before. Almost directly we saw such a large fellow—I'm sure he was six feet high—he looked at us and at the dogs for a moment, and then off he went. My gracious! what hops he did give! he hopped with his two hind-legs, with his fore-legs in the air, and his tail straight out behind him; and wasn't it a tail!—it was as thick as a bed-post! and this great tail went wag, wag, up and down, as he jumped, and seemed to balance him behind. But Hector and Fly were after him. This time the stock-keeper ran too, for the ground was level and clear of fallen timber, and you could see a good way before you. I had begun to feel a little tired, but I didn't feel tired then. Hop, hop went the kangaroo, and the dogs after him, and we after the dogs; and we scampered on till I was quite out of breath; and the kangaroo was a good bit before the dogs, when he turned up a hill.

"Now we shall have him," said the stock-keeper; "the dogs will beat him up the hill."

I wanted my breath, but I kept up, and we scrambled up the hill, and I thought the dogs would get him; but the kangaroo got to the top of the hill first, and when we got a sight of him he was bounding down the hill, making such prodigious leaps at every jump, over everything, that you couldn't believe it if you didn't see it. The dogs had no chance with him down hill.

"It's of no use," said the stock-keeper, "for us to try to keep up with him; we may as well stay here. He'll lead the dogs a pretty chase, will that fellow; he's a Boomah, and one of the biggest rascals I ever saw."

So we sat down at the top of the hill, under a gum-tree, and there we sat a long time, I don't know how long, until we saw Hector coming up. The stock-keeper looked at his mouth.

"He has killed," said he; "but he has got a little scratched in the tussle, and so has Fly. That big chap was almost too much for two dogs." Then he said, "Go, show!" and Hector and Fly trotted along straight to where the kangaroo lay, without turning to the right or left, but going over everything, just as if they knew the road quite well. We came to a hollow, and there we saw the kangaroo lying dead. Just as the stock-keeper was going to cut him open, I saw another kangaroo not a hundred yards off.

"There's another," said I; and the dogs, although they had had a hard battle with the kangaroo lying dead, started off directly. Close by us was a large pond of water like a little lake. The kangaroo was between the dogs and the lake. Not knowing how to get past, I suppose, he hopped right into the lake, and the dogs went after him; he hopped further into the lake, where the water got deeper, and then the dogs were obliged to swim, but they were game, and would not leave their work. When the kangaroo found himself getting pretty deep in the water he stopped, and turned on the dogs; but he could not use his terrible hind-claws, so when one of the dogs made a rise at his throat (they always try to get hold of the throat) he took hold of him with his fore-legs, and ducked him under the water. Then the other dog made a spring at him, and the kangaroo ducked him in the same way.

"Well," said the stock-keeper, "I never saw the like of that before; this is a new game."

And all the while the dogs kept springing at the kangaroo's throat, and the kangaroo kept ducking them under the water. But it was plain the dogs were getting exhausted, for they were obliged to swim and be ducked too, while the kangaroo stood with his head and fore-legs out of the water.

"This will never do," said the stock-keeper; "he'll drown the dogs soon at this rate." So he took his gun from me, and put a ball in it.

"Now," said he, "for a good shot; I must take care not to hit the dogs."



He put his gun over the branch of a dead tree, and, watching his time, he fired, and hit the kangaroo in the neck, and down it came in the water. He then called off the dogs, and they swam back to us.

"He's such a prime one," said he, "it would be a pity to lose his skin;" so he waded in after him, and dragged him out. "It's a pity," said he, "to lose so much meat, but his hind-quarters would be a bigger load than I should like to carry home; but I must have his skin, and I'll tell you what, young fellow, you shall have his tail, though I'm thinking it's rather more than you can carry home."

This roused me a bit, to think I couldn't carry a kangaroo's tail; so I determined to take it home, if I dropped, though I must say it was so heavy that I was obliged to rest now and then, and the stock-keeper carried it a good part of the way for me.

"What shall we do with the meat?" said I.

"What shall we do with it!" said he; "are you hungry?"

"I believe you," said I.

"Then we'll make a dinner of him," said the stock-keeper.

With that we got together some dry sticks, and made a fire, and the stock-keeper took the ramrod of his musket, and first he cut a slice of the lean off the loins, which he said was the tenderest part, and put the ramrod through it, and then he cut out a bit of fat, and slid it on after the lean, and so on, a bit of fat and a bit of lean, till he had put on lots of slices, and so he roasted them over the fire. He gave me the ramrod to hold, and cutting a long slice of bark out of a gum-tree, made two plates—capital plates, he said, for a bush dinner. I told you we had got some salt and some damper, and I was pretty hungry, as you may suppose, and I thought it the most delicious dinner I ever ate. When I had done, I laid down on the grass, and Hector and Fly came and laid themselves down beside me, and somehow, I don't know how it was, I fell asleep, I was so tired. I slept a good while, for the stock-keeper said it would have been a sin to wake me, I was in such a sweet sleep. I woke up, however, after a good nap, and felt as if I could eat a bit more kangaroo. But it was getting late, and so we made the best of our way home. We passed by the place where we had killed the first kangaroo; so the stock-keeper brought home the hind-quarters and the three skins, and I brought home a tail; and really I don't know which is best, kangaroo steaks or kangaroo steamer.

"Or cockatoo-pie," said his mother; "and now to bed. I daresay we shall dream all night of your 'Tale of a Kangaroo.'"

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE NEW HOUSE.

At the end of March the nights began to get cold; the children felt the change. Puzzled to contrive doors and shutters for the cottage.

Crab returned with the bullock-cart. Told me there was a lot of sawed stuff just below the Green Ponds, which I might have if I liked at the cost price. This is just what I want for the doors and shutters of the house. Set Bob to work at the stone chimney; the whole end of the house and the chimney to be built of stone. Went down myself with Bob to the Green Ponds, with both carts and the eight bullocks. Drove one cart myself, and Bob the other. Find I'm a capital bullock driver; no one knows what he can do till he tries. Bought the stuff and brought it back the same day.

Took possession of our new house April first, and worked hard at the doors and window-shutters. Frost at night.

All hands at the stone chimney. Made a rough job of it, but got on pretty well. The stone is easy to work, it easily breaks into flakes handy for working; as for mortar, we use some sandy loam mixed with clay from the river, and it seems to make cement good enough for our purpose.

Finished the stone chimney, and lighted a blazing fire, for the nights are cold now; and with our large table in the middle of the room, with Betsy's green cloth on it, and seated on our logs of wood, we formed a cheerful party at supper.

Rose early, according to my custom, and surveyed my new dwelling with a particular sort of satisfaction. "No rent to pay for you," said I; "no taxes, that's pleasant; no poor-rates, that's a comfort; and no one can give me warning to quit, and that's another comfort; and it's my own, thank God, and that's the greatest comfort of all." I cast my eyes on the plain before me, and saw my flock of sheep studding the plain, with my working bullocks at a little distance. My dogs came up and licked my hands. Presently my children came out into the fresh morning air which was rather bracing, as the weather was getting colder every day in the morning and evening, but still warm in the middle of the day, and we had a romp with the dogs. As we sat at breakfast that morning in our rude cottage, with the bare walls of logs of



trees and the shingle roof above us, all rough enough, but spacious, and a little too airy, I began to have a foretaste of independence and security of home and subsistence.

Finished all the doors and shutters, and put on good fastenings of bolts and locks which I had brought from England.

Considered in April whether it would not be well to turn up some ground to sweeten ready for spring sowing in September. The winter frosts, should there be any, of June, July, and August, would pulverize the clods a bit. I can't help smiling while I write this of June, July, and August, being the *winter* months; it shows how topsy-turvy things are here. Consulted Crab about it, for he understands farming well. Crab says there must be something wrong about it; he cannot understand how I can pretend to have a **SPRING** sowing in **SEPTEMBER**! "It's against reason," he says, "and against nature, and he can't encourage such nonsense."

Thought I'd try a bit of land about a quarter of a mile from the house, and that lay handy for fencing—about twelve acres. Stuck the plough into it this morning, and it turned up rarely. Crab came to laugh at us. I saw he eyed the furrows wistfully, and cast a longing look at the plough. At last he grew fidgetty, and taking occasion to find fault with the furrows for not being straight, he seized hold of the shafts, shoving me aside without much ceremony, saying, "Heaven be good to us! do you call that ploughing? Here, give us hold." His grim visage seemed actually to change and light up when he felt the wood in his hands, and giving the word, Bob smacked on the bullocks, and Crab, in the exuberance of his joy, began to sing some extraordinary Shropshire song, which made the woods ring again, and the work went on merrily. From that hour Crab would allow no one to touch the plough but himself, and he really seemed to enjoy his work with all the relish of an unexpected restoration to an old and loved occupation.

The ground was quite clear of trees, and without many stones, and in little more than a fortnight the whole was turned up. Then we set to to cut down the light timber in the vicinity, to make a bush fence, which employed us for some time. After that, we worked hard to fence in a bit of ground for a garden. We had to go rather farther from home after some stringy-bark trees, best for splitting lathes, and contrived to enclose about an acre. Then we had a stock-yard to build, and pens for the sheep, and to fence it with bush fences. Building the stock-yard was hard work, as we

had to form it of the solid trunks of trees, about nine inches to a foot in diameter, and from twenty to thirty feet long; these we had to drag by bullock-chains and four bullocks, from a spot about a mile and a half from the house; heavy work, and hard labour to set them up. I determined to do everything well, and in such a way as to fall in with my plan of the future farm and buildings. All this work, and the sending of the cart three times to Camp to bring up various articles, occupied the whole of the winter months of June, July, and August.

In the spring, that is, in September, I sowed the whole of my twelve acres, after giving them another ploughing, with the best seed-wheat I could get, casting it pretty thickly, and allowing two bushels and a quarter to the acre, which Crab thought too much. This seed cost me twelve shillings a bushel. I might have waited, I found afterwards, till October or November, but I thought it best to sow too early rather than too late.

At the latter end of this month, taking advantage of the dry days, seeing that the weather was mild, I sowed the various seeds in the garden which it is usual to sow in the spring in England.

I ought to say here, that I found the winter very mild. The snow lay on the ground once for three days, about two inches thick, and there was ice strong enough to bear in one or two places, in a deep hollow about three miles from the cottage, which the rays of the sun did not reach. The mornings and evenings were cold, particularly just before daylight, when the cold was sharpest, but the middle of the day was like a bright October day in England. There is very little rain in the autumn in Van Diemen's Land, that is, from the beginning of March to the end of May; and not much rain during the winter months of June, July, and August. The rainy season is for about six weeks or two months in the spring, that is, in September and October.

My one hundred and eighty ewes, which I bought last March, have produced me this November two hundred and twenty lambs, many having dropped two lambs a-piece. I trust the wool will be improved, as I had taken care to choose the best rams I could find shortly after I bought them. This makes my flock look respectable.

This month I bought six cows, heavy with calf, for four pounds each. They are fine cows, but rather wild. Applied for another servant from the Government, and had assigned to me a tolerably good one, but he knows nothing of farming. We find now that we have plenty to do. My poor wife works



hard, for the female servants are generally idle, troublesome things. Her mother, however, helps her with the children. . . .

Got the windows of the cottage glazed, and covered the floor all over with boards, and put boards over our heads for a ceiling. The shepherd found some whitish earth, like whiting, about six miles from the cottage. I had long since plastered it inside and out with sand and river clay, and now I gave it a coat of this whitewash outside, which gave it a very smart appearance. For the inside, I mixed with the white earth some of the red ochre which is abundant in many parts of the country; this produced something of a salmon colour, and the plaster being smooth, the ochre gave it the appearance of stucco, and it looked very well and seemly.

We begin to think something of ourselves, and should assume airs of importance, only there is no one near us to show them to.

December was my month for sheep-shearing. Rather light-handed for this work. Washed the sheep in a bend of the river close by. The wool turns out pretty well, but far from fine. The wool of the lambs, now fourteen months old, the best part. I calculate the whole of the fleeces together weigh about nine hundred and twenty pounds: that is, two pounds and a half to the fleece of the one hundred and eighty ewes, one hundred and eighty lambs, fourteen months old, and eight of the forty wethers which I bought in March last. In England, I think this wool would sell for about fourteen-pence per pound.

We are now getting to the end of December, and summer is coming on. The wheat looks well, which Crab attributes to his peculiar method of ploughing, which he has endeavoured to explain to me; but I cannot understand it, although I agreed with him, of course. He says he shall wait to see how the wheat comes up, and then he shall bid me good-bye and go home.

The garden comes on beautifully. Peas want sticking. Cabbages and cauliflowers transplanted last month doing well. The six cows dropped their calves this month. This will make them attached to the place. The *beginning* of the farm looks thriving; may the *end* not disappoint me!

Wheat was up high in January, and the ears well formed. Crab says there will be a good crop, but thinks I should have done better if I had turned up a bit of the land lying lower, as the present bit seems to want more moisture. I proposed to try it for next year.

"Next year!" said he; "you won't catch me here next year. I don't know how I've come to stop in this strange country so long already; but somehow there has always been something to do, and I must own I should like to see how this bit of land will turn out that I've had the ploughing of, and take home a handful of wheat to Shropshire, to show the folks there what sort of stuff they grow in Van Diemen's Land. I shall be sorry to leave you and the children, but here I won't stay, that I'm determined on. Things have certainly seemed to turn out lucky with you as yet; but that will only make the ruin when it does come—and come it will, more miserable. That's my mind."

After this long speech, the grumbling and good-natured Crab proceeded busily to begin a piece of fencing which it would take at least six months to complete.

The anniversary of my landing in Van Diemen's Land came, being the third of February. Next day I cut the wheat. Crab rejoices at the fine harvest. "Thirty-five to the acre," says he, "if there's a bushel!" This produce he attributes principally to his own sagacity and superior skill in ploughing.

About half an acre of potatoes looks well, but I fear it is running too much into top. Everything grows here with a remarkable luxuriance; the garden is a mass of green vegetables.

Kept the twenty-seventh as a grand holiday, being the anniversary of our arrival at the Fat Doe River. Crab can hardly believe that we have been here a year, and that he has been so forgetful as to remain so long in the country. Sat down with my wife to take stock. After enumerating all our goods and chattels, sheep, bullocks, cows, &c., I was about to conclude, when my wife stopped me.

"You have forgotton part of our stock," said she.

"What stock is that, my dear?" said I.

"The five children, my dear."

"Oh," said I, "very well; by all means let us put them in the list. There's William to begin with, and a fine fellow he grows."

"And Betsy," said she.

"And Ned and Mary," said I.

"And Lucy."

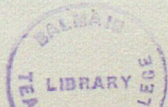
"And that closes the account," said I.

"Not yet," said she.

"How's that?" said I.

"You had better leave a space there."

"Hulloa!" said, I, "what's all this about?"





"It's the air, I suppose; but you say yourself that everything in this new country is topsy-turvy."

"Topsy-turvy, indeed!" said I. "Why, how shall we feed them all?"

As I spoke those words, my eyes rested on my increasing flock of sheep, with the cattle grazing on the beautiful plain before me; and, turning my head, I admired my yellow wheat-stack, which seemed like the promise of the future abundance which would reward patience and labour. Many thoughts crowded on me; I began to feel the solid enjoyments of an agricultural life. I looked at my kind and patient wife, the companion of my toils, my helpmate and my consolation in troubles of mind and difficulties of fortune. I rapidly compared the difficulty of providing for children in the old country with the facility of subsistence in the new one; and, elated with my feelings of independence, I startled my wife with crying out joyously, "Well, there's plenty for all; land, and house, and meat, and what not! so the more the merrier!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### TO THE RESCUE.

For four years all things prospered with me. But now the uniform life which I had led experienced a great change. Just before the winter, that is, towards the end of May, we were sitting round our cheerful fire, and the servant had with difficulty borne in a huge log to replenish it; it was about nine o'clock, and quite dark, when the barking of the dogs announced the arrival of a stranger; he was on horseback, as we could hear from the sound of the horse's hoofs on the hard ground. He was quickly shown into the house, and according to the custom of the colony, food and drink were placed before him ere he was troubled with any questions. But he was eager to communicate the tidings with which he was charged.

Information had been received by the Government of the escape of a body of convicts from Macquarie Harbour, who were spreading consternation over the district of Pit Water, where they had plundered and ill-used many settlers, and where they had been joined by further bands of convict servants. Our guest was in haste to communicate the intelligence to the resident magistrates, as it was thought likely that the band of bushrangers would turn their steps to this

district, as being unprotected, and abounding to the west in places of concealment.

We were still in earnest conversation on this alarming news, and I was hastily revolving in my mind the best means of guarding against an attack, when loud cries, seemingly for help, from the opposite side of the river, on which a new settler had lately fixed himself, caused us suddenly to break up our party. I lost no time in preparing our arms, which from habit were always kept in a state of efficiency, and calling in two of my men on whom I could entirely depend, I entrusted them with a musket apiece, and made such preparations for our own defence as the circumstances afforded.

Crab, who had now become part of the family, undertook to defend the house; and after a hasty consultation, we agreed that it would not be kind or manly to abandon our neighbours in their distress and difficulty. I was perplexed to contrive how to render them the requisite assistance, and to leave a sufficient defence at home, when a fresh and violent barking of the dogs caused us a further alarm. The night was quite dark, but the stars shone brightly. The dogs barked furiously, and it was plain to us, who were acquainted with the language of their warnings, that they were excited by the approach of some unusual object, and of more than a single individual.

Seeing the necessity of prompt and decisive action, I advanced from the door of the cottage, being protected in the rear by one of the men. A voice amidst the tumult called out to me to call off the dogs, who were furious. I thought I recognised the voice of the speaker, and it proved to be a neighbour who had settled about four miles off. He had been going his rounds to look after his sheep, marauders being abroad, when, approaching within half a mile of my cottage, his attention had been attracted by the cries which had alarmed us. He was well armed, and accompanied by two friends, also well armed.

Cheered by this reinforcement, I lost no time in acquainting them with the news of the escape of the convicts from Macquarie Harbour, and of my fears that our new neighbour was in the hands of the bushrangers. They at once agreed to lend him their help; and as I was well acquainted with the point where the river could be best crossed, and my home being now secure from any sudden attack, we advanced without delay to the scene of danger. The family which we were hastening to help had not arrived on their land more than three weeks, and consisted of a Mr. Moss, his wife, a daughter about seventeen, and two young boys of seven and



six years of age. They had been well off at one time, but a succession of misfortunes had reduced their means to an income too small for a bare subsistence in England, but amply sufficient for a prosperous establishment in Van Diemen's Land. Mrs. Moss had been highly educated, and her daughter was possessed of more than the usual accomplishments of her age, and of their former station. The arrival of this young lady at our settlement seemed, as a young friend of mine expressed himself, "like the springing up of a beautiful flower in the wilderness." We all felt a strong interest in these new settlers, and we were ready to risk much to serve them.

While my friends put themselves in fighting order, I buckled my old cavalry broad-sword round me so as not to interfere with my movements, for having served in the yeomanry in Surrey, I had ever after a liking for the weapon to which I felt I could trust in case of close conflict; and with my double-barrel fowling-piece slung over my back, and my large horse-pistols in the pockets of my shooting jacket, I led the way across the river. My companions followed cautiously and silently in Indian file. It was quite dark, with the exception of such glimmering light as the brilliancy of the stars afforded.

It was my plan to cross the river by the trunk of a tree which had fallen over from the opposite bank and formed a natural bridge, a rough one, and not easily to be passed by day; and in the dark the passage over it was rather a dangerous experiment. There was a dead silence around, which seemed more terrible than the cries by which we had recently been alarmed, and filled us with ominous fears for the sake of our neighbours.

We quickly reached the crossing-place, and in a low whisper I warned my companions of the dangerous points of the bridge. My young neighbour, Beresford, was particularly anxious on this occasion. I did not remark it at the time, as we were all active and excited; but subsequent events made me remember it. The river at this spot is narrow, and flows with the rapidity of a mountain torrent. I observed in the gloom that Beresford's two companions hesitated at the sight of this difficulty.

"I wish we had light for this work," said one; "I can see the foam of the water, and I think I can see something which I suppose is the tree lying across it; but it's an awkward job this."

"Speak low," said I; "you don't know what ears may be listening to you."

"Speak low! why, the roaring of this water is enough to drown all the noise that we shall make on this side. The river seems to be angry to-night. I hope you are sure of your tree-bridge. I should not like to find myself in that boiling gulf below; if I did, I'm inclined to think nobody else would find me."

"It's an ugly sight," said the first speaker; "but if Thornley is sure of the passage, I'll venture it; and don't let us lose any time, for if we are to do any good, we must be quick about it."

"Well, we are in for it; we can't go back; who leads the way?"

"I'll lead the way," said Beresford; "I'm the youngest of the party, Now, follow me."

"No," said I, "that's my business; I know the passage best——"

"Perhaps not better than I do," said Beresford. "Come on."

"How can that be?" said I. "You have not occasion to cross the river so often as I have."

Beresford said something which the noise of the waters prevented me from hearing. I led the way, and began to crawl over on my hands and knees.

I must confess that it was not without a momentary tremor that I beheld the white foam of the torrent dashing furiously past beneath me. A single false movement was death; and the disagreeable feeling came over me that if an enemy should have had the foresight to guard this point, I and my companions in our defenceless position were exposed to sure destruction.

With these thoughts agitating me, and the darkness of the night, the incessant rushing of the water, and the danger of our expedition, all tending to inspire doubt and fear, it is impossible to describe my sensations, when, stretching forward my arm to feel the way before me, my hand encountered what seemed to be a human head of hair. I was clinging to the trunk of a tree, in a position disabling me from the use of my weapons, nor indeed did the necessity of holding fast allow me to have more than one hand momentarily disengaged in my creeping posture. All sorts of fears were instantly conjured up in my horror and bewilderment.

My first thought was that the bushrangers, suspecting our intention, were lying in ambush, and every instant I expected to receive a volley from the opposite bank. Then visions of the natives arose, and I actually crouched up, the better to defend myself against the shower of spears which I knew



would be the beginning of their attack. My companions behind me, embarrassed by my stoppage, and not knowing the cause, urged me to proceed, as the swift running of the white waters beneath their eyes was beginning to produce giddiness. For nearly a minute I was totally at a loss what to do. At last the mist with which the sudden alarm had enveloped my brain began to disperse; I reasoned with myself rapidly and decisively.

I knew that to go back over our perilous bridge was, in the dark, and encumbered as we were with our arms, impossible. Go on we must. As I formed this resolution, it suddenly occurred to me that the form before me must be in the same embarrassment as to advancing or retreating as myself; and that, at any rate, the chances were equal in the event of a struggle for mastery. Emboldened by this thought, I stretched out my hand again, and met the same object. It seemed certainly a human head! It was motionless, and had remained, as well as I could judge, in the precise position in which my hand lighted on it before. But the second time the hair struck me as being softer, and the sensation flashed across me that it was not a man's hair that I was feeling. My wonder increased at this new discovery, and my fears yielding to my excitement, I extended my arm and traced the long ringlets of a woman! My alarm was now changed to wonderment and horror. Laying my hand on her face, I found it deadly cold; her arms were encircled round the trunk of the tree, but they hung lifeless, and I at once guessed that the female, whoever she might be, in attempting to cross the river by this dangerous place, rendered more dangerous and frightful by the darkness, had been terrified by the roar of the raging waters, and had fainted.

What to do in this unexpected dilemma I was at a loss to imagine. My companions began to be alarmed, and the infection of superstitious fear was beginning to unnerve them. In these perplexing and dangerous circumstances I felt the necessity of coming to some prompt decision. The female before me had evidently either fainted, or perhaps, overcome by fear and exhausting excitement, was dead. But her lifeless body formed an obstacle to our further progress, and I considered that, at that very moment, while I was deliberating, the work of death might be going on among our neighbours whom we were endeavouring to succour, and that our assistance was prevented by an impediment to whom all help perhaps now was vain.

With this feeling—that four lives were at stake on the trunk of the tree, trusting to my guidance, and that other

lives were jeopardised by the delay of our assistance, the exquisitely painful thought came over me, that stern necessity justified the sacrifice of the one for the many, and that we must risk the dislodging of the body of the woman for the purpose of completing our passage across the river. The form lay motionless, and on the balance on the slippery trunk of the tree; the slightest motion was sufficient to overturn it into the boiling and roaring gulf below! My companions urged me to proceed. I explained to them in a few words the cause of my stoppage; but they still continued to press me to go forward, their fear of the present peril overcoming their apprehension of the remoter hazard, should the bush-rangers be in ambush on the other side, and waiting for us to rise up to get the surer aim; they vehemently and angrily complained that they could no longer keep their hold, and that they could neither recede nor advance.

Impelled by the imminency of the danger, my senses benumbed by the cold, and my mind confused by the unceasing roaring and foaming of the furious waters, my presence of mind also forsook me. I stretched out my hand again: the form was still motionless—but I traced the outline of the small and delicate features of that cold face, and quick as lightning the thought of my own daughter flashed across me. That thought restored my wandering senses. I became instantly calm and collected; and with a sort of desperate energy I raised myself to a sitting posture across the tree, and propelling myself with my hand towards the object before me, I took firm hold of her long tresses to prevent the body from slipping from its dangerous resting-place. All continued to be still around except the noise of the river. I now raised my voice to over-top the roaring of the waters, and turning my head towards my wondering companions, I communicated to them my intention to preserve the body dead or alive.

"It is the form," said I, "of a young girl."

"A young girl!" exclaimed Beresford. "Then——"

"In the name of heaven," said the man behind him, "do not stay talking. Man or woman, young or old, we must pass now to the other side. Necessity has no law. Move on quickly, for I shall not be able to hold on half a minute longer."

"Yes," cried out the hindermost, "move on—move on—I dare not attempt to move backwards. As it is, the cold has so benumbed me, and I am so giddy with the roaring of these waters under me, that every moment I expect to slip off. Move on, I say; this is no time for fine feelings; our own



lives are at stake. We are lying here to be murdered if there are really bushrangers abroad—and this affair looks like it. Move on, I say, or by — I shall be tempted to make a way for myself."

"Stop," said Beresford; "stop—for God's sake, stop. I have a horrible presentiment of who this poor girl must be. We must make an effort to save her. Let me try to pass you" (speaking to me); "or stay—I think I see a branch below that the water is rushing against; I will make the attempt to save her if I perish."

With that my young friend, passing his fowling-piece to me to hold for him, threw himself by a bold and active movement under the tree; and clinging by the broken boughs, by a succession of desperate struggles succeeded in gaining a position on the other side of the female, where the thick part of the trunk afforded a surer footing. He then gradually drew the motionless form towards him, and taking it in his arms, bore it to a small distance from the river, and laid it on the grass, glistening with the white frost. In the meantime we had all succeeded in crossing the bridge safely; and the men finding themselves on firm ground, soon recovered their presence of mind and courage, and were ready for action. There was no time to be lost. The spot which we had to reach was less than a quarter of a mile distant, and we were all eager to move forward. But what was to be done with the lifeless female? Young Beresford had been endeavouring to restore warmth by chafing the hands of the inanimate body, but without success. It seemed as dangerous to leave it on the cold ground, should life be not quite extinct, as to bear it with us. But decision was necessary; and yielding to the entreaties of Beresford, whose interest in the inanimate form seemed overpowering, we hastily agreed that he should bear the body with us while I advanced before, being best acquainted with the locality, his two friends following close after me. In this order we approached the spot where our new neighbour had raised his homely dwelling.

As I neared the place my foot alighted on a soft substance, which induced me to stoop down to examine it. It was a dead kangaroo dog. I felt it, and found that its brains had been dashed out by some heavy instrument. This occurrence foreboded danger, and we proceeded rapidly and silently, but with increased caution. The outline of the hut now loomed through the dark; all was silent. We were perplexed how to proceed; we could see no enemy, and feared some plot to entrap us. We continued our advance, however, to the

door of the hut in a line, young Beresford bearing the body in the rear. I held his fowling-piece in my hand, with my own slung behind me. We reached the door; it was fastened, but we thought we could distinguish stifled breathing within. We knocked; no answer. We were impressed with the conviction that the enemy, whoever it might be, was there.

I directed Beresford, in a whisper, to take the body to the side of the hut, that it might be out of the line of fire from the windows and door. Then, with one dash of my foot, I burst the door from its hinges, and we three rushed in. A scream, so deep, so piercing, so full of mortal fear and agony, that it even now thrills through me as I recall it, arrested our steps. But I guessed on the instant the real state of the case. On the hearth the embers were still red. Snatching a handful of thatch from the roof, I made a blaze. That light revealed to me the form of a woman, crouched in a corner, bound, with two young children beside her. The transient blaze of the lighted grass ceased, and we were again in darkness.

"Oh, God!" cried the woman, "are you come again? I have never spoken—not one word—indeed I have not—and the children have scarcely breathed—but if you are determined——"

"We are friends," said I, "come to assist you; we heard your cries——"

"Oh, why did you not come sooner?—my husband—my child—my daughter, where is she?—she ran out to get help—is she drowned?—what have they done with her?—my God! my God! shall I never recover the horrors of this dreadful night?"

While she spoke these words, which pierced our very souls, and filled us with the most fearful forebodings, one of my neighbour's friends had lighted up some thatch on the hearth, which threw a glare around, and enabled us to see about us; fortunately, a candle which had been extinguished was found close at hand; this afforded us a dim and dismal light,

Beresford, who heard the scream, had caught the words of the mother, and while I stationed one of our party at the door of the hut, and another at the back, he hastily brought in the body of the apparently lifeless girl. The mother, whom I had unbound, did not speak;—she gazed on the body of her child in speechless agony.

"She is dead," at last she muttered—"she is dead!—they have killed her!—better so, perhaps, than worse! What



may have happened? Am I awake, or is it a dream? Oh, no—it is all real—cold and dead—cold and dead!”

A passionate burst of tears followed these words, uttered in all the calmness of despair, and the children, now recovered from their stupor, mingled their cries with the bursting sobs of the mother.

But my young friend was not inactive during this painful scene. With wonderful coolness and presence of mind, he took all the steps that were likely to restore consciousness, if life remained, and the energies of the mother beginning to revive, she presently added her assistance. He had placed the body of the poor girl on a rough wooden couch, with her feet close to the fire, which was now blazing up briskly. The mother rubbed her feet, and my friend chafed her hands; but life seemed to have departed. The mother said nothing, but worked on silently, the two children looking on in trembling expectation. I stood by, racking my brain to remember all the means that I had read or heard of to restore suspended animation. There was no apparent injury, her mother assured us, to cause death, and our hopes revived even at the faint prospect of restoration which this intelligence afforded us. All that I have related, since we began to cross the river, took place in less than twenty minutes, so that the possibility of life being not yet quite extinct still remained; but the hope became every moment less and less.

While we were thus employed and thus agitated with our various fears—the mother for her child, the young man for the beautiful girl before us—and I, as a parent, entering into the bitter sorrows of their weeping mother, we heard loud shouts proceeding from the direction of the place where we had recently crossed the river, and presently, at a rapid pace, a party of friends joined us.

The news of “bushrangers abroad” had quickly spread from neighbour to neighbour, and the present party having assembled, they learnt at my house our expedition and its object, and immediately started to support us. They had crossed at a point of the river higher up, but affording an easier and safer passage. Fortunately the gentleman who had settled among us as a surgeon was among the party, and his attention was immediately directed to the apparently lifeless form of the beautiful young girl.

It was a moment of most painful expectation. He felt her pulse long and anxiously. I saw his countenance change. He held before her lips a small pocket looking-glass, which he first, with professional coolness, carefully wiped. He inspected it once—twice!

"Place her," said he, "on her side."

It was done.

Again he applied the glass to her lips. It was untarnished.

"Throw more wood on the fire," said the surgeon. "Light wood—quick—make it blaze up."

He applied the glass again.

Gradually the countenance changed from the expression of hopelessness which had saddened it, and suddenly it lighted up as the brightness of the glass became obscured. We were breathless.

"Hush!" said he. "Be calm," addressing her mother. "All will depend on your coolness and presence of mind. If you can command your feelings, I may do much. She is not dead!"

Here an hysteric sob seemed to choke the mother, but she stifled it; and, with hands clenched, and cheeks streaming with silent floods of tears, she sank on her knees, with her eyes dimly gazing at him who seemed to be her guardian angel.

"She is not dead!" repeated the surgeon in a low tone. "Life—I think—I am sure—still remains; but the slightest shock would instantly destroy it. Beware of exciting her by questions or by disastrous news, should I succeed in restoring her to consciousness. Nothing but silence and soothing will save her from death or insanity. Has any one some brandy with him?"

Fortunately one of the party—the most drunken fellow in the settlement—had a travelling flask of rum, which, indeed, he was never without. It was quickly produced; and, after its owner had taken a sip of it, "to see," as he said, "that it was the right stuff," he handed it to the surgeon. I am inclined to think that that flask of rum saved the young lady's life, but it cost its proprietor his own sooner than in the ordinary course of things, for from that moment he was never without his flask, always emptied and ever refilled, "in case," as he used to say, "any other unfortunate person might chance to want some of it;" and so, on the strength of the life that he boasted it had saved, he hastened the end of his own.

"And now, gentlemen," said the surgeon, "be pleased to retire from the hut, and leave me alone with this lady. There seems to be more work for you to do before this family can be set to rights."

We silently obeyed. I was the last who quitted the room; and as I was going out at the door, the poor mother laid her hand convulsively on my arm, and with a sort of desperate



calmness whispered, "My husband—have they murdered him?"

"Surely not," I said; "hope for the best—you see we are strong enough to take active measures for his safety. Depend on us that we will neglect nothing to find him, and to restore him to you."

"I am sure you will. See, the surgeon is trying to pour some spirit down my poor child's throat. Now leave us."

All this time Beresford had not spoken a word. I found him as I passed stationed close to the door. There was a light outside the hut now, as some of the party had kindled a fire in front of it, which threw its glare around for a considerable distance. All our party now assembled together; and it was agreed that we should keep watch round the place during the night, and that at daybreak we should go in search of our neighbour. We made a diligent examination of the parts about, as we conjectured that the bushrangers might have bound and gagged him, and left him at a distance from the hut; but we could find no traces of him or of them. With one accord I was chosen leader of the present expedition, as being the oldest settler, and the one best acquainted with the bush. I had mustered my party with the view of allotting to them their different stations, when a cry from the hut arrested our attention, and young Beresford came running to us, and crying out,—

"She is saved! She is saved! She is alive! She is breathing! And now," said he, "for her father: that's the next thing to attend to. It's the first inquiry she will make when she recovers her senses, and if she should suspect the worst, the consequences in her present state I am sure would be instantly fatal."

"That is our object," said I; "we must find the poor fellow. And now let us make our arrangements. There are twelve of us; I dare say we are strong enough to cope with the other party; for we have the right on our side, and that is a tower of strength. I propose that at break of day we should remove this family to my cottage. In the meantime it is necessary that we should prepare ourselves for bushing it for some days perhaps. Let four men go to my cottage, and procure all the necessaries that we shall want, and don't forget the kangaroo rugs, for the nights are cold, and we shall need them."

"Don't forget some brandy," said one.

"Nor the tea and sugar," said another; "there's nothing like a cup of tea in the bush; it's more refreshing than all the spirits in the world."

"Bring plenty of pannikins," said a third; "one apiece will not be in the way."

"Take care to bring plenty of rice," said I; "it lies in a small compass, and is more handy for the bush than flour; but tell them at home to make as many small dampers as we can carry; and bring away all the baked bread in the house. My men will help you to carry the things."

"How are your powder-horns?" said young Beresford.

"Plenty of powder, but little shot."

"Ask for the bag of slugs, and the little bag of balls that hang by my bed's head," said I; "and bring a dozen or two of spare flints with you, and anything else that you think will be useful."

"Would it not be well," said one, "to give notice to the magistrates?"

"Right," said I; "who will volunteer to go over the plain this dark night, and tell the one farthest off?"

"That will I do," said a spirited young fellow; "I know every inch of the way; if I meet with anything, I will fire off my piece."

"You can tell one of my servants to apprise the other magistrate of this night's work, as his house is in a line from my cottage. If he is at home, he will be with us by daylight, you may depend on it; for he is young, and has no wife or child, and he likes these expeditions. It may be useful, too, to have a magistrate among us to sanction our proceedings, so ask them to come with us, and say that we should be obliged to him if he would be our leader; and you may as well say that no one could do it so well as himself. There's nothing like being civil, and we all like to be flattered a bit. Who knows what it is o'clock?"

"Not eleven yet."

"Then we have the whole night before us."

"And so have the bushrangers; they may get well away before morning."

"No," said another; "it is impossible to travel fast on a night so dark as this. Let us have daylight before us and get well on their tracks, and they can't escape us."

"Shall we try the dogs after them?"

"No; the kangaroo dogs are of no use as bloodhounds; they will track those they are used to for any distance, but they don't understand being set to track strangers. But we must take some dogs with us, for we shall want to pull more than one kangaroo for our dinners before we have done, I'm thinking."

"Here's one to begin with," said I, as I felt a cold nose



thrust into my hand. "Hector and Fly are growing old now, but here's one of their breed, and here's another. They have found me out, you see. Now let some one get two more, so that the four may not all belong to one party, in case of being separated. Shall we take any horses? I have three in the stable, and four more in the bush that are sure to come for their corn in the morning. Perhaps they're in the open stable now, for they often come up and get under shelter when the nights are wet or cold."

It was agreed that four of the party should be mounted, to act as scouts; but as it was likely that the marauders would choose the most inaccessible paths, where a horseman would be taken at great disadvantage, it was thought best that the rest of the party should be on foot.

"Take another horse as a pack-horse," said one, "to carry our provisions, and let one of your men lead him."

"A bright thought!" said I, "and now I think we shall be well prepared for the bush; so I recommend all to sleep as much as they can till daylight, that we may be the fresher for the work."

"Oh, never mind sleep; we are too much excited to sleep to-night; but let us have some supper."

"Will you come to my cottage, or stay here?"

"Oh, stay here; we will not leave the poor woman to-night; no, we'll sup here, and make a bush night of it to begin with; but it's terribly cold. There," said the speaker, throwing a heavy log on the fire, which made the sparks fly up like a firework, "there's some food for you; and there's another and another. By George, we'll have a jolly fire, and make a merry night of it. I say, how's the young woman?"

Beresford required no further hint than these words; looking at me, I gave him a nod, and he disappeared in an instant. He tapped gently at the door of the hut, and returning to us immediately, whispered to me—

"She lives! she has not spoken; but she sleeps."

"Good," said I, "and now you sleep too; we shall want all your strength to-morrow."

He smiled, and shook his head—"I will never sleep," said he, "till I have found her father."

"I do not doubt," said I, "that you will spare no exertion to recover him; and now let us try to get some information about this sad affair. Is the mother cool enough to tell us her story? It would be a help to us to know something of the character and numbers of the party who attacked the hut. We should not lose any time by it, as it would be useless to start in pursuit of the bushrangers till daylight. See if the

poor lady can leave her daughter for a while; the surgeon can sit by her while the mother is away; and we ought to know all the particulars as well as she can tell them."

Beresford went to the hut, and presently returned with Mrs. Moss, from whom we were happy to learn that her daughter still breathed and slept. We placed the afflicted lady on a log of wood before our bush-fire, and our sentinels being planted in suitable places, to guard against surprise, she described the attack.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE ATTACK OF THE BUSHRANGERS.

I **HARDLY** know where to begin (said Mrs. Moss), I have very little to tell. It all seems now to have passed in a moment. We were sitting round the fire, I and my husband; and my poor Lucy and the two children. Since we came up here, my husband always used to keep his gun in his hand, or else close by him, ready for use, for our greatest horror was these bushrangers, and I don't know really whether I was most frightened to see him always carrying that eternal gun about with him, or to see him without it; though it would have been but little protection against so many! Perhaps it's all for the best. If he had fired, and killed one of them, it might have exasperated them, and they might have done worse. Well, we were assembled round the fire, as I said, and my husband was particularly cheerful; he was sitting in the corner close to the window, with his gun leaning against the wall close to his hand, when he got up to close the shutter on the other side, as the wind was chilly.

It seems that we had been watched all the evening, and I suspect one of our men (we have only one man besides the shepherd) was a spy on us, for my husband had left the corner where his gun was, only for a moment, when a man in a kangaroo jacket rushed into the room, and got between my husband and his weapon, which he seized hold of, and pointing his own gun at my husband, commanded him to throw up his hands over his head, or he would fire.

We were all in a cluster together, and my husband fearing, I dare say, that we might be wounded or killed, held up his arms. On this the bushranger threw his gun over his arm; but my husband in an instant rushed at him, and clasped him round his body. In the struggle, the bushranger's gun



went off. But in the meantime more bushrangers had come; two of them immediately seized my husband from behind, and the first struck him over the head with the end of his gun, which I think stunned him for a time. They then bound him tightly hand to foot, and at the same time two of them held me and bound me also, and another man took hold of the children. Looking round, I missed Lucy, and guessed that she had escaped from the back window of her little bedroom. God help her! I hardly know whether to wish she may be restored to life and consciousness or not. But God's will be done!

Well, gentlemen, when they had bound my husband, they asked him where he had put his money; for being new settlers, we had been so imprudent as to bring nearly a thousand dollars with us, besides a little plate, and our watches, and other articles of value, of which no doubt the bushrangers had information. My poor husband was scarcely recovered from the stunning blow of the bushranger's gun, but he declared that we had no money; that we were poor settlers, and had nothing with us but a few necessities, such as flour, and tea and sugar.

The man who had first pointed his gun at him now placed it close to his head, and swore most horribly that if he did not instantly tell him where the money was hid he would blow out his brains. This man seemed to be the leader.

"Money," said he, "we will have; we know you have got it, so tell us where it is, or"—and here he swore a dreadful oath—"you shall have the contents of this barrel through your brains."

I was held by two men, who had tied a handkerchief over my mouth, and it was in vain that I struggled to get loose. The bushranger put his finger on the lock of his gun, and I heard a click; I knew well what that click meant. In another instant I expected to behold my poor husband's head shattered to pieces. With a desperate strength, which nothing but despair could have lent to me, I loosened one arm, and tearing the handkerchief from my mouth, I exclaimed, "Oh! tell them, tell them! For God's sake, tell them!—life is better than money."

"Oh—ho!" said the leader, "so there is money, after all. Then I think I'll find a way to get it. Here," he said to one of the men, "put your musket close to this gentleman's head; that's right—now cock it—now put your finger on the trigger, and if he offers to cry out—fire! And now for the lady. Just put the handkerchief over her mouth again, and this time take care she doesn't get it off again; a woman can't

hold her tongue, though her husband's brains may be blown out from her talking. In the meantime, ma'am," said he with a sort of mock politeness, "I'll trouble you to walk into the inner room. I should not like to shock a lady's nerves, nor a gentleman's neither, with what is usual in these cases."

"I will not move," said I, horrified at his words. "I will not move; I will not leave my husband and my children. Kill me, if you will, but here I will stay."

"By no means," said the mocking bushranger; "we never wish to kill anybody if we can help it, that's not our game; but if you will not walk you must be carried."

The two men who held me lifted me up in an instant, and carried me into the bedroom, where they threw me on the bed.

"Now," said the leader, "is the lady put comfortably to bed?"

"Ay, ay," said the men who held me down; "we've got her tight enough."

"You see," he said to my husband, for I could hear him speak plainly, as the two rooms are separated only by the log partition, "you see how things are; you had better tell at once, before we proceed to further extremities."

Extreme terror and faintness had kept me silent till this moment, but now fear for my husband and my children, as well as the horror of my own condition, overcame all other feelings, and I cried out, "I'll tell, I'll tell. Don't fire. Take up the stone before the hearth—the money is there."

The leader immediately desired some one outside to bring a strong stake to lift up the stone, telling him to be quick, for they had no time to lose, as they had to travel before morning. Then I heard them remove the stone, and the dollars chinked as the man pulled out the bag and threw it on the floor. The sight of the heavy bag and the sound of the money, I fancy, put the party in good-humour, for the men who held me relaxed their hold, and one left, telling the other not to lose sight of me.

Presently I heard the leader say—

"Where's the young girl?"

No one seemed to know.

"By—," said he, "the young hussy has escaped, and she will give the alarm. Be quick, my men, quick—quick; leave nothing behind that you can carry away—blankets, sheets, clothes—everything. We shall want them when we get to the lake. It's a pity, though, that the girl has escaped. She will set her father free, and that may be awkward for us.



Stay; we'll take him with us, and then he can't give any information about us."

"To shoot him is the shortest way," said one.

"Hang him," said another. "Chuck him into the river, and there he'll be snug till somebody finds him."

"Don't stand talking about it," said a third; "shooting him would give the alarm, and throwing him into the river is unnecessary trouble. Just lend me a bit of cord, or a silk handkerchief, and I'll warrant he'll be quiet enough after."

I conjectured he was about to strangle my helpless husband, for I heard the leader say—

"Stop!—no murder, if we can help it. We can do that with him at any time, if his living is likely to harm us. For the present we will take him with us. Loose his legs and bind his arms behind his back. And now let us be off. But first let us make the lady safe."

I was taken accordingly into the sitting-room; and then they bound me fast, and left me as you found me. My husband had been silent all this time, with the object, no doubt, which he carried into effect when he was removed outside the hut. When he found himself on the outside, where his voice could be heard, he immediately set up a loud shout for help, that made the woods ring; he was answered by screams near the river, which proceeded, I do not doubt, from Lucy. My husband's cries were instantly silenced.

"Gag him!" cried out a voice.

"Let us knock that young vixen on the head before we go," said another voice; "she will rouse the neighbourhood, and our plan will be defeated."

"It's too late," said the leader; "the alarm is given already. It would do us no good to put the girl out of the way now; we should only lose time; we must be quick, and place a good distance between us before we can be pursued. We shall gain a march, for we cannot be tracked till daylight; but we can travel all night, and so get well ahead."

With that they left me, threatening me and my children with instant death if I uttered the least sound of alarm. I think I must have fainted; for I remember nothing more 'till I was aroused by the door of the hut being burst open, which the bushrangers, I suppose, before they left, had fastened on the outside.

"How many in number," said I, "do you think they were?"

"I cannot tell; I think there must have been eight or ten at one time in the hut; at the same time I heard the voices

of some outside. All those whom I saw were armed with a gun of some sort. They were wild-looking ; the leader had on a kangaroo-skin jacket, and he did not look very ferocious, but he was very determined."

"It was your husband's and your daughter's cries," said I, "that we heard on the other side of the river, and it is plain, from your story, that your daughter endeavoured to cross the river for help, but was terrified by the roar of the waters and the difficulty of the passage, and that, overcome with exhaustion, she fell into a fit on the trunk of the tree in which we found her. Let that fortunate escape," added I, "inspire you with the hope that we may be successful in finding your husband uninjured."

The lady then returned to her daughter ; and our companions, who had gone on their several missions, having returned, we passed the remainder of the night by the fire, planning our next day's expedition, and giving and receiving mutual information on the best course to be pursued, and the likeliest track of the bushrangers.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MURDERER AND THE NATIVES.

THE day had just begun to break when we were cheered by the appearance of the young magistrate on horseback, with a servant and two friends also mounted, and two constables on foot. They were all well armed ; and when he had communicated to us the intelligence which he had received in the night of the numbers and desperation of the bushrangers, we were not a little glad to be joined by such an efficient reinforcement. The magistrate immediately took on himself the conduct of the expedition ; and his activity and determination were so well known, that all the party were happy to place themselves under his direction.

The plundered family having been first removed with the greatest care to my house, the poor young lady showing no other sign of life than a low breathing, we lost no time in putting ourselves in order. The magistrate divided our body into two parties, entrusting the command of one party to me, and the other to young Beresford. As the four horses brought by our last reinforcement were sufficient for the purposes of scouts, the remainder of the party proceeded on foot, so that each of our parties, Beresford's and mine, consisted of seven, including ourselves. With these preliminary



dispositions we set about searching for the track of the bushrangers, extending ourselves in a line, the better to cover the ground. The track was soon found, as the large body of the bushrangers, laden with their booty, could not conceal the marks of their passage.

"Stick to the track," said our leader to the constable who acted as guide, "and let nothing distract you from it. Gentlemen," said he, addressing us, "I shall leave on the track all those on foot, who I trust will be ready for action. I and one of my friends will gallop on for some distance towards the tall tree on the high hill yonder, and try the chance of coming up with the rascals. Two of the horsemen will scour the country on your flanks. We are only eighteen in number, and the bushrangers are reported to have more than thirty among them. But we are in a better state of efficiency than they can be. Take care not to throw away your fire. Now we will go and clear the way for you." Saying this, he galloped off in the direction to which the track of the bushrangers seemed to lead us.

We continued our course warily but rapidly for about ten miles, when we found the magistrate and his three companions waiting for us at the spot where two tracks were distinctly visible. We had scarcely exchanged a few words, when the horseman to our left galloped into view, and made silent but expressive signs for us to come to him. He motioned us to be cautious, and to look about us. I beckoned to the horseman on our right to join us, and, leaving him as a sentinel to mark the point of the track from which he had been called off, we moved quickly to our left, and soon reached the spot to which the horseman had called us. Here our eyes were suddenly arrested by a spectacle which caused us all instinctively to throw forward our arms, and gaze anxiously around us. The sight chilled our very blood, and was sufficient to strike the boldest among us with consternation and horror. Amidst the ruins of a stock-keeper's hut, recently burned down, we beheld a form which we recognised as human only from the outline of the body. One arm was totally consumed; the other was shrivelled up. The body was literally roasted and charred. It was in vain, after we had recovered the first emotions which the horrid sight created, that we endeavoured to trace the features of the disfigured head; it was a shapeless mass of calcined bone. The clothes, which might have served to identify it, were, of course, utterly consumed.

It must not be supposed that in making this examination we were neglectful of our own safety. Our active magistrate

immediately despatched the two unemployed horsemen to make circuits of discovery round the place, and while he, with one of the constables, made a close investigation of the ruins, the remainder of our little party stood in order, with our arms prepared in readiness to meet any attack. Our first impression was, that the hut had been visited by the bush-rangers, who, either in malice or revenge, had set fire to the hut, and burned to death the unfortunate occupant. But the truth was presently made manifest by one of the horsemen, who hailed us from a little distance to join him.

We proceeded towards the spot where he was standing, and we presently came on two dead bodies, evidently stock-keepers from their clothes and appearance. They were quite dead and cold. Their wounds at once informed us that they had been killed by the natives. On laying bare their clothes, we found their bodies pierced with innumerable small holes caused by the long thin spears used by the natives in their encounters. Their heads were battered to a jelly-like mass, from the frequent blows of the waddies, a small and light club of hard wood, which forms the weapon of the natives of Australia in close combats.

The sickening sight of these two bodies, coupled with the horrid form amidst the ruins of the hut, told plainly what had happened. The stock-keepers had been attacked by the natives, who had, no doubt, intercepted the two unfortunate men before us, and had killed them after a hard fight, as the number of their wounds testified. The third stock-keeper, it seemed, had been able to gain the hut, in which, perhaps, he had defended himself for some time against the natives; and the black people had set fire to the thatch of native grass, and so consumed it and him. We searched again and more narrowly amongst the charcoal ruins, and found the barrel of a musket partially melted by the fire, with the lock nearly whole and the piece of brass belonging to the butt of the piece. This was confirmation of our surmise. The stock-keeper in the hut had very likely wounded or killed one or more of the natives, and they, rendered more savage by their wounds, had burnt him alive!

At this time a native of Australia, by name Musquito, a tall and powerful man, had been committing many atrocities in Van Diemen's Land. He had been sent from Sydney some years before for an offence—I think it was a murder that he had committed—by Governor Macquarie, a proceeding complained of at the time, but gradually forgotten, as Musquito, until within the last year or so, had conducted himself well, and had proved himself useful on several occasions by tracking



runaway convicts, and lost or stolen sheep. It was known that he was at the head of a mob of natives, consisting of about thirty; but we had no idea that he was in this part of the island: however, this looked very like some of his work, and we were not a little troubled at the prospect of having to contend against the treacherous natives as well as with the fierce and desperate bushrangers. This was an addition to our difficulties and our danger on which we had not calculated, and the magistrate called a council of war to deliberate on the best mode of proceeding.

We took advantage of the opportunity of this halt to refresh ourselves, as we anticipated hard work. On the hearth of the demolished hut we found a tripod, such as was in common use then, and now too, for boiling things in, holding three or four gallons. One of the constables cleaned it out to make tea in. There were many of the shrubs known by the name of the tea-tree growing near, and as we wished to husband our stock, we made tea of some of the leaves, which resemble the leaf of the privet, which is common in the hedges in some parts of England. In the meanwhile some of our party buried the two dead stock-keepers, after having first examined their clothes narrowly, to see if we could find any paper or marks by which they could be identified. On one we found a tin tobacco-box, which was given in charge to one of the constables, and on the other was his pass, from which we ascertained his name, and also that he had recently arrived from Hobart Town.

All this time we took care to guard against surprise, for we did not know who might be watching us, but we felt no fear from an open attack of any body of natives that could be collected against us; but if by chance Musquito and his mob of natives should join with the bushrangers, we felt that such a body of sixty or more persons, with the bushrangers well armed and desperate, might be more than we could cope with. These considerations troubled us all not a little, and we made haste to despatch our meal, keeping a strict look-out the while.

Our banquet was not a very merry one, I must say; we all had very long faces, with some slight misgivings of the prudence of our expedition; not that there was any want of courage among us, or of the spirit of enterprise; we were bold and cool enough; but some of us had left wives and families behind, and we felt that we were fighting against odds; that we were risking our own lives, which were precious, against the lives of rascals which were worthless.

These thoughts, with the burial of the dead and disfigured men, and the sight of the other man burnt into charcoal, cast a gloom over us which was painful and dispiriting. Our kangaroo dogs went smelling about with their tails down, and crouching with that expression of fear which these hounds display when they are in the vicinity of an unusual object, and especially when they see or smell a native. One of them poked about the ruins, and startled us with a howl so dismal that it almost chilled us with a sort of superstitious fear.

"Young Hector is uneasy," said one.

"He knows there's something wrong," said another; "and he can't make out what that charcoal body means. I don't think he has much spirit in him just now to pull a kangaroo."

Hector, however, suddenly belied this surmise, for ascending the little eminence above the ruins, he assumed an attitude of lively and fixed attention. His head became erect, his eyes keenly piercing into the bush, and his body ready for a spring.

"Silence," said I; "Hector has got a scent of something. I know his ways well. See, he looks at me to intimate that there is something in the wind. Go see," said I; "see, Hector, good dog, what is it?"

The intelligent animal immediately set off into the bush stealthily, and without barking or growling. He was soon out of sight.

"It's only a kangaroo," said one of the constables.

"It's more than a kangaroo," said I. "Hector is almost equal to his old sire, who could do everything but speak; and, indeed, I think he could have talked, if he only knew how to begin; but I understand his signs well. Depend upon it, there's a reason for what he does."

As I spoke these words, we observed the dog cantering back to us at a swift pace. He came straight up to me, and whined with peculiar signs of fear.

"He has seen a native," said I; "that I'll swear. I can't mistake him. We had better be prepared, though I can't think they would have the temerity to attack us."

"Let us go and face the danger," said our young leader; "it is better to put an end to it one way or the other; as to retreating, that is out of the question."

"Oh," said we all, "no retreat, no retreat!"

"Then put yourselves in order, gentlemen, and let us move on."

"Let us follow the dog," said I, "and go warily about it.



These natives hide behind the trees, and you can hear nothing of them till you find a spear sticking in you. Keep the other dogs back, and let me and Hector go first. Now, Hector, good dog, where is it?"

Hector licked my hand, as if to say, "Take care of yourself," and trotted on before. I kept immediately behind, taking care not to over-run him, and the rest of our party followed quickly after us, on the alert, and with their arms ready. Hector continued at his trotting pace for about two hundred and fifty yards, when he stopped, and assumed the attitude of a dog pointing at game. I tried to pierce into the bush with my eyes, but I could discover nothing. I looked back, and saw my party behind, all ready for action.

"Go see!" I said to the dog.

The dog hung down his tail, sniffed, whined, and standing up, pawed me with his fore-legs.

I patted him.

"What is it, Hector?"

But some terror hung over the hound, and he was reluctant to move forward; but he looked towards a particular part of the bush, and uttered a low whine expressive of unusual fear.

The magistrate now, leaving the others behind, joined me.

"What is the matter with the dog?" said he.

"I can't tell," said I; "but there is some reason for all this."

"Observe him now;" said the magistrate, "he is looking intently at some object not far off. Stand here and hold my horse, and I will go on the line the dog points to."

He immediately advanced on foot, having first observed the bearing of an object behind me, in order that he might keep in a line straight to the point to which the dog's eye was directed. In the meantime the party behind came up to where I stood, and we all held ourselves ready for an alarm. The magistrate had not advanced far before he stopped, and looked cautiously around him, holding his fowling-piece in a position to fire, and without turning his head beckoned with his arm for us to advance.

We came up to him, and he silently pointed to a hollow and blackened trunk of a tree, the branches of which were still standing, and covered with the late autumn leaf. Within the trunk we saw standing up a native, with his face turned towards us. The blackness of his colour assimilating with the charcoal of the burnt tree prevented the body from being distinguished from the blackened trunk until we got close to it, but the acuteness of the hound's organs had enabled him to detect this object at a considerable distance. The sight of this native lurking within the body of the tree instantly filled

us with the fear that there were more close at hand, and we expected every moment to receive a volley of spears from the hidden enemy; but none appeared, and all was silence. The dogs, however, showed symptoms of uneasiness, which made us look about us.

"Shall I fire?" said one of the constables; "it's a sure shot."

"Stop," said the magistrate; "let us try to take him alive; we have got him safe; he can't get through the back of the tree, and we hem him in at the front. But it's odd that he doesn't move."

We were about thirty yards from the tree, but as the native was within the trunk, we could not discern in the obscurity more than his dusky body; the trees were very thick all round, forming a dense mass of trunks as close as they could grow. It was a favourable place for the natives to fight in, and they are so active, and so clever in hiding themselves, that you may be in the midst of hundreds in such a place without being able to catch a sight of one of them.

"I'll put an end to this," said the magistrate; "be ready, my friends, and don't let him escape."

Saying this, he ran towards him with his fowling-piece pointed towards the tree.

"Why, he's dead! and we have come upon a native's grave; I have heard of them, but never saw one before. This is one of the black fellows that the stock-keeper shot, no doubt, before he was burnt to death in the hut."

On examining the body, we found the mark of the musket-ball that had gone through his heart and passed out at his back. He was most likely close to the hut when he was shot, and must have been killed instantaneously.

We were clustering round the tree, gazing at this sight, and a little off our guard, when a whirr was heard among us, and a long thin spear, passing through the group of heads without wounding any one, stuck in the bark of the tree. We were quickly roused by this compliment, and we turned about, looking around on all sides; but we could see nothing. Presently we heard the tramp of a horse's feet, and a crashing through the bushes, and the horseman whom we had left as a sentinel came into view. A spear was sticking in his back, and two pieces of broken spears were sticking in the sides of the horse, which seemed maddened with fright and pain. It was with difficulty that the rider could direct his horse towards us, the animal being almost unmanageable.

"Look out," he cried: "the natives are on us—I have not



seen them; but they have marked me and my horse. Depend upon it they are joined by the bushrangers, or they would not think of attacking an armed man on horseback. Musquito is with them you may be sure, and he has taught them that the danger is over when a fire-arm is discharged; I dropped mine when this spear struck me. It came on me unawares; and, in catching at the bridle when the horse started, I dropped my piece. I am not much hurt; but this spear makes me smart a bit."

"Oh! never mind a spear-wound," said our young magistrate; "we have got a surgeon among us, so we are all right."

While these words were passing we had secured the horse and our friend dismounted. The spear had penetrated the flesh under his right arm, and the point was sticking out of the wound three or four inches on the other side. It was a small spear, about ten feet long. The end had been sharpened and hardened in the fire by scorching it, according to the custom of the natives, and it formed an ugly weapon to be lodged in a gentleman's person. The two constables quickly drew out the pieces of broken spear from the horse's side; they found more than a dozen spear-holes in the horse's body, which bled freely, but none of them seemed to be deep, except two. All this passed in less than half a minute; and we were all the time looking out for an attack, but could not guess from which quarter it would come. We stood in this way for several minutes, straining our eyes to discover our enemies, but in vain. Suddenly our young leader, who was sitting on horseback, cried out—

"Holloa, they're at me!"

We turned and looked. A spear had gone through his hat sideways, and knocked it off; but we could see no one.

"That was a good shot," said one of us. "Perhaps the next may be better—look out!"

A shower of spears fell among us from the same quarter, hitting one of the constables, and wounding another. As the distance, however, was great, they did little more than penetrate the skin, and a laugh was raised at the expense of the sufferers. The parties speared, however, did not seem to enjoy the joke at all.

"It's of no use," said one of them, "to stand here to serve as targets for these black rascals; let us make a rush into the bush, and come to close quarters."

"They will not let you," said our leader; "you have no chance against them that way; but we must do something. We must try to drive them through this belt of wood, and

get them into the plain beyond, where we shall be able to see what we are about. But we must be very cool, and very cautious. Take three of your party," said he to me, "to the left; and do you, Beresford, take three of yours to the right, so as to slant the black rascals, and drive them from the trees. Take care to keep us in sight, and don't advance too far. The rest must advance steadily straight on; I and the two on horseback will be ready to give assistance to either party."

We lost no time in effecting this movement, and proceeded at a brisk pace through the wood. Beresford's party had the first shot;—the natives moved round to the other side of the trees; then we had a shot at them; and in front was our main body. They could not stand this long; they did throw some spears at us, but they fell harmless. They scampered off, in number some thirty or forty, as near as we could guess, and we after them, till they came to the edge of the bank bounding the wood, over which they disappeared.

We were hastening after them, when suddenly thirty or forty armed men started up from beneath the bank, and fired a volley on us, which brought us to a stand-still. We were all in a line, separated, but not far from each other, the chase after the natives having caused us to break our ranks. I looked down our line when the volley was fired, and it was with the most painful concern that I saw my young friend Beresford drop to the ground.

It was clear that the natives had formed a junction with the bushrangers, and our little party now stood in their presence, with fearful odds against us, and with three of us disabled. Thus fairly brought into action, we had nothing to trust to but our courage and discipline, and the moral superiority which the right always has over the wrong. The bushrangers, after their first volley, had disappeared under the bank. Our leader instantly called out, "Reserve your fire—close together—now follow me."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE BUSHRANGERS' RETREAT.

WE immediately turned to the right to a point about fifty yards off, where there was a clump of trees which projected from the main mass of the forest. By this manœuvre we turned the position of the bushrangers, which at first was in their favour, to our own advantage, as it enabled us to take



them along their line, so that they stood in one another's way, and, while they were unprotected in the open plain, we were sheltered by the trunks of the trees.

As I followed with my division of the party, I passed poor Beresford whom I had seen fall at the first volley of the bushrangers. Raising him up, we bore him to the shelter of the wood. Our present position enabled us now to see the movements of the bushrangers. It was not their game to fight, only to disable and embarrass the pursuit; we were not surprised, therefore, though I must confess I felt considerably relieved, to behold the bushrangers in rapid retreat stealing under the bank.

Perhaps it would have been prudent in us, seeing their numbers and determination, and assisted by a harassing body of natives, to have let them alone, and to have suffered them to retire without molestation. But our blood was up, and as I have often observed on other occasions, there seems to be a fighting instinct in human nature, so that two men, or two bodies of men, when they have got opposite each other with the intent of fighting, do not like to separate without exchanging blows.

These thoughts occurred afterwards, for I was as hot as any of us at the time, and as eager to continue in pursuit. The sight, too, of our neighbour fired us. We saw him amidst his plunderers, with his hands tied before him, and goaded on by two or three of them. We were all going helter-skelter after them, when we were stopped by the voice of our young leader, who was the coolest among us.

"Stop, gentlemen," said he; "we must not go too fast. Remember that our lives are precious, and it is my duty not to allow you to expose yourself unnecessarily. I am afraid these rascals are too strong for us. You may observe that the natives seem to be confident in their numbers. We are only eighteen in number, and our enemies are at least sixty or seventy. I make no doubt that a party of soldiers which the Government has directed to the Clyde will follow our steps, and they can easily track us to where we are. My advice to you is to wait here till that help reaches us; then we shall be a match for them."

"No waiting," cried out one bold young fellow; "let us go at them while we are in the humour for it. Those rascals will never fight when it comes to the scratch; let us make a rush at them, and put an end to it."

"If you will allow me to give my advice," said I, "I am of the same opinion as our magistrate. We ought to endeavour to take these fellows alive; it would be a dear victory

if we were to buy it at the expense of many of our own lives."

"Oh! let us fight it out now," cried several; "why, these bushrangers will be joined by more convicts, depend on it, as they go on. Let us crush them at once, before they get to a strength too much for us to put down."

"Well," said the magistrate, "if you are determined to go on with this job, I will not disappoint you; but we must use a little stratagem in our proceedings. It is now four o'clock; in a few hours it will be dark, when, you know, the natives will not stir, for they are afraid of the evil spirit which they believe wanders about in the night-time. I propose, then, that we should remain where we are for two hours, so as to make the bushrangers think, if they watch us, that we have given up the pursuit. Then we must track them to their resting-place for the night, and so surprise them asleep or off their guard, for our object is to secure them alive, and to rescue our friend from their hands, with as little risk as possible to ourselves. Are you agreed?"

"Agreed," said we all.

"Then now let us lose no time in attending to young Beresford."

We were all glad to find, on examination, that Beresford had only been stunned by a ball which had grazed his head; there was not much bleeding from the wound, but as the blood had flowed down his face, which was as pale as death, it gave him a ghastly appearance. In less than half an hour he was sufficiently recovered to sit up, but he complained of headache and weakness of the limbs.

"Do you think you could keep up with us?" said our leader.

"I'll try," said he; "at any rate, you shall not be stopped on my account. I would rather stay behind."

"And be speared by the natives," said I, "which you certainly would be. No, no; if we go on, you must go with us, if we have to carry you, for our party is too weak to be divided."

"And now, gentlemen, pray make the best use of your time. Rest yourselves; and while you have the opportunity, put your arms in order, and I recommend you to put new flints in your hammers. It is half the battle to have your weapons in good order. We shall have the advantage of the bushrangers there, for their muskets must be rusty and out of order."

We set ourselves about the work accordingly, and put our arms in good condition, keeping a good look-out the while,



but we were not molested. At the end of two hours, one of the horsemen was despatched on the track of the enemy, and after him another to keep the first in view, and to communicate with the main body. The third wounded horse we feared would be of little use, so he was turned loose in the bush, and his saddle and bridle stowed away in the fork of a tree, and covered over with bark to keep it dry. His rider's wound was a little stiffish, but he said he should be all right if it came to a brush, and he got warmed to the work.

Our party was divided as before. I had the direction of six men, and Beresford of six more. The dismounted horseman made Beresford's party amount to seven. Our leader, who was well mounted, made excursions of observation on either side.

In this order we proceeded on the track of the bushrangers till the dusk of the evening, when we made another halt. Planting sentinels around, whom we relieved at stated times, we remained in this position till midnight. We then resumed our march in Indian file, calculating that we should reach the resting-place of the bushrangers at three or four o'clock in the morning, at which time the slumber of sleepers is most profound.

But we had found that we had overrated our powers of tracking; we had not proceeded half a mile before we were brought to a standstill; we had lost the track, and in the obscurity of the night we found it impossible to recover it. We remained, therefore, where we were, afraid to light a fire, lest we should reveal our position. We made cautious excursions to the right and left, in the hope of discovering our enemies from the light of their fire; but we could see nothing, and the night passed away in one of the most disagreeable bivouacs I ever witnessed. We contrived the best supper that we could in the dark, and those who could got some sleep.

At the first dawn of light we were up and stirring, but it was a good half-hour before we could recover the lost track. The morning was hazy and raw, and we all felt that it was anything but a pleasurable expedition that we were engaged in. I have often admired how much difference a good night's rest and a good supper make on the capabilities of a man; it is in vain that enthusiasm lends its aid to support us in arduous undertakings; man, after all, depends much on his physical condition, and the old proverb of an English soldier being in the best fighting condition after a good dinner I have had frequent opportunities to test the truth of.

On we went with very long faces and very blue noses, for

about three miles, when we came to a brook about twenty feet wide, and not very deep, to the border of which our track led. The walk, or rather the trot, had warmed us up a bit, and without any hesitation we all dashed into it. It was nearly up to our middle, and the stream ran very strong, but we crossed it merrily. Proceeding onwards, the track led us to the summit of a green hill, at which point it appeared the bushrangers had taken a sudden resolution, for the track now proceeded at a right-angle from the old one, and, after following it for a couple of miles, we found ourselves on the banks of the Shannon River.

Here we were a little at fault, for the stream was too deep and too rapid to be forded, and we were not sufficiently ingenious to construct an extempore canoe from the bark of a tree, as the natives of New South Wales are accustomed to do. On the other side of the river, which was about sixty yards wide, was a stock-keeper's hut, which looked as if it had been abandoned, so desolate and wretched was its appearance.

The tracks on our side of the river were quite fresh, and it was evident that a body of men had recently crossed at the spot where we stood. Our leader despatched the two constables to the right and left to make discoveries; but they returned, after the lapse of an hour, with the report that they could find no means of crossing the river, and that they had discovered no track.

After similar explorations on all sides, we were compelled to come to the conclusion that they had crossed the river at the point where we were standing, but how they had done it was the puzzle. There was no sign of any living creature on the opposite bank, and the stock-hut, from its roofless condition, and the general aspect of things about it, seemed to have been long since abandoned. It was in vain that we held a council of war; no one could help us out of our difficulty; there was the deep river between us and our enemy, and there we might stay for ever, if we waited till it had done flowing.

"Let us go higher up the river," said one, "till we come to a place that is fordable."

"Lord bless you!" said one of the constables; "you will find no ford on the Shannon. It's the most rumbustious river in the whole colony, and always goes ramping and roaring along as if it were in the most terrible hurry in the world to get over the ground. It's quite a spec to cross it on horseback, unless your horse is a real good one, and in the dry season. But, what do I see there? Look! Don't



you see a little sort of a punt behind those sedges? It is a punt! Depend upon it, the bushrangers crossed by that thing."

We all gazed anxiously; and sure enough, there was a something about six feet long, and how wide we could not tell, which looked like an outlandish washing-tub set to soak, and which might, by a vivid stretch of the imagination, be likened to a punt.

"Well," said the magistrate, "we will not be stopped by the Shannon, or by anything else, in doing what we have a mind to. The horse that I am on will do anything that a horse can do, and I will make the attempt. Do you, gentlemen, draw yourselves up so as to protect my crossing, in case of enemies lying on the bank opposite, and I will try what Diamond can do."

With that he was about to urge his horse into the water, when the constable called out—

"Stop, sir, stop! You don't understand the strength of the stream, or you would not attempt to cross straight over. You must go up a hundred yards or so, and you will find the force of the current will not allow you to land on the other side nearer than the point opposite. Better say a hundred and fifty yards up; and pray take care to keep your horse's head well up the stream, or you will be turned over in no time."

"Thank you," said the magistrate, "for your counsel. I always listen to the advice of old hands."

Taking the stream at about a hundred and fifty yards to the right, he plunged in, taking a little leap from the bank. He went under water as high as his waist, but it was only for a moment, for as he leaped his horse against the stream, the force of the current, aided by the exertions of the horse in an opposite direction, buoyed him up directly. He had taken the precaution of holding his fowling-piece in his hand above his head, so that his weapon escaped damage.

The action and struggle of the horse, guided by a practised hand, were beautiful. The rampant stream swept on with a sort of fury, as if ravenous for the prey upon its bosom, but our young leader, as cool as if he were on the high road, with his fowling-piece raised high out of the reach of the spray of the waters, held on his course, undismayed by the rushing waters.

It was a short course and a dangerous one, for the utmost efforts of the noble and powerful animal, whose energies were called forth to battle the impetuous current of the famed Shannon River, were barely sufficient to enable him to reach

the landing-place. But he did reach it, and our breathless suspense was allayed by a success which, during its progress, seemed all but impossible.

He waved his gun to us when he was safe, and we replied by a cheer, forgetting our habitual caution, and the necessity of silence in a bush expedition. We then observed him ascend the bank, and approach the ruined hut. Some argument that he made use of was irresistible, for presently, to our great surprise, we saw a man emerge from the building in the usual habiliments of a sojourner in the bush, that is, a kangaroo jacket.

This detected individual proceeded with some alacrity, partly prompted by his desire to assist his fellow-creatures in crossing the stream, and partly, I suspected, by the persuasive influence of the magistrate's gun, which I observed to be most pertinaciously pointed at the head of this inhabitant of the Shannon, to the place where the washing-tub punt was moored under the bank. Something that the magistrate said to him seemed to have the effect of making him redouble his exertions.

Having taken his place in the punt, he proceeded to creep up the bank, sometimes propelling his frail boat by a sort of oar, and sometimes catching hold over the shrubs and inequalities of the bank. Having obtained the requisite distance to enable him to shoot the passage, he used his paddles with the most commendable vivacity, stimulated, perhaps, by the sight of a tolerable number of gun-barrels ready to inflict instant punishment on any vacillation or treachery, and quickly came to land a little above the spot where we were standing. When we saw this nondescript species of craft, we were amazed at anyone trusting himself to such a speculative attempt at navigation. We looked at the punt, and we looked at one another, but no one offered to take his seat in this novel addition to the transport service.

"Now, Worrall," said one of the constables to the other, "you're the man to set the example. Didn't you cross the Derwent once in a bark canoe when you were——"

"Hold your tongue," said Worrall; "if I was a fool once, it's no reason why I should be a fool again. Get into it yourself with your fat carcass, and then perhaps there will be one rogue less in the world."

"Not cross in my punt!" said the Columbus of Van Diemen's Land; "why, there's no danger at all. There *was* a stock-keeper last week who crossed, that is, who would have crossed if he had not been so obstinate. He *would* lift up his head as he was lying at the bottom of the punt, and of course



it upset, and I got a wetting, and was very near losing my punt. But it was his own fault that he was drowned. Now, misters, who comes first?"

No one seemed at all inclined to "come first," and there were whisperings about wives and families, and the first duty of a man, and such like. Meanwhile the magistrate, on the other side, was making earnest gestures for us to join him, and I felt that it was necessary for some one to take a decisive part, so I stepped forward with the intention of making the first trial. But the gallant young Beresford anticipated me, and without saying a word, he placed himself in the punt, and the man of the river pursuing the same process of crawling up the side of the stream by which he had reached us, landed him safely on the other side. This put us all on our mettle, and it was not who should shrink from the risk, but who should go first, that was now the question. I have often thought since of the hazard of this crossing, and wondered how we escaped; but so it was: we all crossed over in safety, and leaving a couple of sentinels on the outside, we all entered the hut.

We were wet, and cold, and tired. The sight of glowing embers, therefore, on the hearth was very cheering. We quickly provoked the fire to a blaze, and enjoyed the warmth with unusual satisfaction. There was a tripod on the fire, in which we immediately made tea for the party, for tea is always cherished as the grand restorer of fatigue in bush excursions; spirit heats and debilitates, but tea refreshes and strengthens; such is the experience of all in Van Diemen's Land. I don't know whether porter or ale might not do as well, or better; but porter and ale are not to be found in the bush, and they are commodities too bulky to be carried about with you; so that the universal ingredient is tea; and a rough-looking stock-keeper, in appearance something between a bear and a badger, talks of his tea with the same gusto as an old woman at a Scotch christening. With tea, then, we made our bush breakfast, and as we were all particularly well pleased with our own courage in crossing the river, we were in high spirits.

We endeavoured to ascertain from the occupant of the hut something of the condition and probable route of the bush-rangers, but this ambiguous individual protested most vehemently that he had seen nothing of them, and that how the marks of the footsteps came which we pointed out to him surpassed his comprehension!

We knew that this was a lie, and some of us were strongly inclined to shoot him on the spot, to prevent his giving infor-

mation about us; but the magistrate prevailed on us to postpone this summary mode of execution till we came back, observing that shooting was too good for him, and that he would certainly come to be hanged without our taking the trouble to interfere in expediting so desirable a consummation. Having refreshed ourselves and dried our clothes, and having carefully examined our locks and ammunition, we proceeded gaily on the track of the enemy.

## CHAPTER XI.

### BUSHRANGERS AT BAY.

WE followed the track, but we could not come up with the bushrangers. We kept on for about twenty miles over a rough and difficult country, crossing the big river by the ford, till we came to the foot of a tier of hills too steep for a fatigued party to encounter. Here we made a halt for the night. The next morning we continued the pursuit. When we reached the top of the tier, we beheld in the bottom before us the wide and beautiful lake then known by the name of Arthur's Lake.

The scene was beautiful beyond description. The morning broke clear and bright, and the sharp mountain air was exhilarating and exciting. Behind us was a romantic country of undulating hill and dale, and before us were the tranquil waters of the great lake. We were all struck with the impressive character of the scene, and for some minutes we were silent.

"How beautiful and quiet the lake looks," said our leader, "with the morning sun lighting it up; it seems a pity to disturb such a place with sounds and acts of blood and battle, but I have a notion that we shall hem in the bushrangers on the borders of that lake, and then, when we bring them to bay, we may prepare for a desperate struggle. Now, gentlemen, if you have satisfied your love for the picturesque, we will move on."

As well as we could calculate, we were about four miles from the margin of the lake, and we proceeded at a tolerably rapid pace, following the track of the bushrangers till we came to its banks. Here, it seems, they had come to a halt, and were doubtful how to proceed; for the shore was much trampled by men walking to and fro. We did not stop long, for, observing that the track led to the left, we followed it. It seemed that the bushrangers were undetermined how to



proceed, for they followed the winding of the margin of the lake for some distance, when, suddenly quitting that course, their track led direct to a point of the lake where some cedar-trees grew on a tongue of land stretching into the lake about a quarter of a mile.

As we proceeded, we observed smoke to arise from the extremity of this point, which we had no doubt was the fire of the bushrangers. After our long and toilsome pursuit, we hailed this indicator of the refuge of the bushrangers with joy and satisfaction, although with a secret consciousness that the end was not to be attained without a sharp and desperate struggle. At the entrance of this little peninsula we halted, and our leader, assuming the air of one on whom rested a serious responsibility, urged on us the importance of discipline, and the necessity of attending strictly to orders in the coming conflict.

"My friends," said he, "we are about to engage with men whom we are driving to desperation. If that fire, as I believe it does, indicates the presence of the bushrangers, you will observe that our approach will hem them in, and that they will have no means of escape but by our destruction. Are you resolved and ready?"

"Resolved and ready!" said Beresford, who had recovered all his energy, although looking a little pale from the effects of his wound; "do you think we have come thus far to shrink back when the decisive moment has come? What would any one of us feel if he was in the hands of the bushrangers, and saw his friends and neighbours sneaking off when it came to real blows, and afraid to go on with the enterprise they had begun? I, for one, am ready for the worst; I have been hit once, but I have no mind to duck my head for all that."

"We are all ready and resolved," we said. "Do you lead us, and depend on it, you may trust us as if we were drilled soldiers."

"Then," said he, "let us lose no time, but endeavour to surprise them in their lurking-place. I think they don't suspect they are followed, or they would never have chosen a ground from which they have no retreat."

"Or, perhaps," said one, "they are confident in their strength."

"It may be so. At any rate, it behoves us to use the utmost caution and address in our advance. And now, let us move on."

We advanced accordingly, with that sort of tremulousness produced by excitement, not fear, which is apt to pervade

those on the eve of a dangerous exploit. But our hope of surprise was soon shown to be in vain, for we had not proceeded more than two or three hundred yards, when a shot from behind a tree warned us that our approach was discovered. This did not stop our advance, however, and rapidly ascending a green knoll, we beheld before us the party of bushrangers in battle array. We levelled our pieces, but the voice of our leader arrested our impetuosity.

"Stop," said he; "that is not according to promise. You must not fire without the word."

"The bushrangers will not wait for the word," said one of us, for at that moment they fired a volley at us. Again my poor young friend Beresford had the misfortune to be hit. He dropped to the ground. Quitting my party, I ran to him; he was bleeding fast. Several slugs had struck him on his right side; he was in great pain, and almost fainting from loss of blood, for the jagged shot made from split bullets had torn him sadly. Without losing a moment in asking questions, I contrived to drag him behind the dead trunk of a tree which was lying close to us. Our leader lost no time neither. In an instant he formed our little party in the position most advantageous to it, by moving us a little to the right.

Our enemies had not had time to load again; but they were busy about it, and as they stood in a position slanting from us, the six shots fired promptly, but coolly, confused them not a little; it stopped the loading of more than one musket, and before they could recover themselves, my party of seven put in a deliberate fire, for we were all used to the bush, and were not at all flurried. We now observed three of their men to drop; but two got up again, one remaining on the ground, apparently shot dead. In the meantime, Beresford's party were ready to fire again, and almost at the same time about a dozen shots came from the bushrangers; not one struck us; but one ball struck the hollow trunk of the tree behind which Beresford was lying, and was stopped by his body.

The bushrangers were now ranged in a line opposite to us, and we counted thirty-one, three having fallen. Several of those, however, who were standing in line were disabled, for one or two were stamping and writhing with pain, and we saw one man with a fowling-piece in his left hand, and with his right arm hanging down, and seemingly rendered useless by a shot. There was one man among the bushrangers whom we could not help noticing and admiring. He was one of the finest men I ever saw. Tall, broad-shouldered, and muscular, his whole form denoted great strength, combined with great



activity. He stood a little in advance of his party, as cool as a cucumber, and quite regardless of the shots that flew about him. As the two parties were not above a hundred yards distant from each other, we occasionally heard his voice encouraging his men.

"Fire away, my hearties!" he cried out, while he was reloading his musket with all diligence—"fire away! Better die by a musket ball than a rope."

With that I saw him deliberately examine the pan of his piece. He was not quite satisfied with its appearance, for he paused for a moment as if in search of something. Stooping down on the ground, he picked up a little twig or stiff straw, and coolly cleared the touch-hole of its obstruction. He then primed the pan quickly, but without hurry, from his powder-horn, and putting his musket to his shoulder, pointed it here and there among us, as if seeking for the best mark. He was not long in finding one. The magistrate, who was on horseback, formed a conspicuous object. The other two on horseback were behind us among some trees, to guard against a surprise from the natives. I saw the bushranger take a quick and steady aim, and immediately after a cry from our leader made me fear that the shot had taken effect. It was certainly a capital shot; it went through his hat, and knocked it off.

"Everybody seems to have a spite against my hat," said the magistrate; "the natives sent a spear through it the other day, and now these rascals have put a bullet through it. Any more of this fun will spoil my best hat. Keep up your fire," said he to me and my party. "This bit of a scrimmage is no joke, gentlemen. Fire coolly, and take aim at a particular man. They are double our numbers, but we have the advantage of position. Who is that man in front? There he is, going to fire again. He has fired, and one of you is down. This is a bad job," said he to the wounded man; "but we can't help it. But what do I see behind us? The natives! By George! they are on us! Look out for the spears! and keep steady, for God's sake. Now we are fighting for our lives indeed. Keep steady, and fire quick. Keep it up—keep it up! Show a firm front, and I with the other two horses will make a rush at them."

We heard the natives at our back uttering loud cries and screams, and inciting one another to close with us. I had enough to do to attend to my own work, for we were almost tired with loading and firing, and another shot from the bushrangers tore open the left arm of one of our party.

The yells of the natives now became louder and fiercer,

and the fire of the bushrangers became quicker, and I thought I observed symptoms of an intention to make a rush at us simultaneously with the advance of the natives.

Spears now fell thick among us, and I thought a crisis had come which would settle the fight without any more long shots, when suddenly I saw our leader with the other two horsemen dash in among the natives, and slash away with their swords. They had served in the yeomanry in England, and understood the use of the broadsword well, and every cut told on the naked bodies of the natives. The waddies were of no use against the broadswords of horsemen, and their slight spears were not strong enough to serve as pikes, so that they were completely at the mercy of the sabres.

If it had been among trees, the horsemen would have stood no chance against such a body of natives; they would have been riddled like sieves by their spears, without being able to get a cut at them; but in the plain the horsemen had all the advantage, for the natives were afraid of the horses as much as of the riders, and finding themselves unexpectedly assailed in that fashion, they were for a little while panic-struck, and incapable of resistance. They soon found the use of their legs, however, and they scampered off like deer across the little plain towards the entrance of the peninsula. The horsemen followed them for some distance, and then returned towards us. In the meanwhile a brisk fire was kept up on both sides.

We had at this time seven of our men disabled, and about thirteen of the bushrangers were in the same condition. But this increased the odds against us; for we were now only six, and with our three friends on horseback nine, against twenty-one. But we had the advantage of position, and we had got rid of the natives; but the hazard seemed desperate.

I now observed the magistrate with his two companions to the left of the bushrangers. They had sheathed their swords and unslung the double-barrelled fowling-pieces which they carried at their backs. All this did not take long in occurrence, though it requires many words to relate. They immediately fired at the bushrangers, and hit two of them. This move evidently puzzled the enemy, but their leader soon formed his party to meet it. Some of them faced about and fired, and one of the horses was hit, as I observed by its plunging about.

The fire of the horsemen, however, sensibly relieved us from the shots of the enemy, and our little party of six now redoubled their fire, and the bushrangers began to waver and show signs of unsteadiness. It was plain that their weapons



were not in the same state of efficiency as ours, for although they all had pieces of some description, their fire was slack and unfrequent, while every one of our barrels told ; besides, we were all accustomed to the use of firearms, which most of the bushrangers were not. I am inclined to think, too, that they were fearful of expending all their ammunition, which they would have a difficulty in replacing.

This and other reasons combined, caused them to slacken their fire. Their firearms, too, for want of proper cleaning, and from the damp of the bush, became every minute more and more unserviceable, and all the while we were pelting them with our shots, sheltered by the trees behind which we fought.

Once I thought they had fully made up their minds to a rush, and the rush might have been fatal to us. They gathered themselves up in a compact body, and the leader led them about fifty paces towards us at a running pace, but at this distance our volley told fearfully. We fired plump into the midst of them, at about fifty yards distance, while the horsemen gave them the contents of three barrels on their left.

This was enough for them. Five fell—two got up again, and three remained on the ground. They now broke and ran away over the little plain. Their leader was the last to run. He turned round, and levelling his musket, gave us a parting shot. This was the only shot that came close to me, to my knowledge, during this bloody fight. The ball struck the left-hand side of the tree behind which I was standing loading my piece ; it knocked off the end of my ramrod, which, in the act of ramming, projected, of course, beyond the trunk of the tree. I thought it an odd shot, but I was too satisfied that it did not knock off me to make any remark about it at that time.

I thought the horsemen would have pursued the bushrangers as they were running off, but, contrary to my expectations, they galloped towards us.

"Keep where you are, gentlemen," said our leader. "Don't let the bushrangers see how we are reduced in number. On the plain they would be more than a match for us, and they might turn and defeat us. We must be content with what we have done, and think ourselves well off. And now for our wounded friends. Where is the surgeon?"

"He was one of the first of us that was hit ; he is lying on the other side of that mimosa tree."

"That's unlucky ; but we must do the best we can. Let us see—how many of us remain fit for service?"

Six of us stood forward.

"Here are six, and that with myself and my two companions on horseback, makes nine, out of eighteen. A melancholy deficit. But with our small numbers it would be madness to force a close conflict with desperate men. We must take counsel what to do. In the meantime let us show a bold front. I did not expect, I must confess, that the bushrangers would fight so well; but they are desperate, and they feel that their alternative is a halter."

We all thought that our situation, with the bushrangers in superior numbers on one side, and with the natives on the other, was desperate indeed. We felt as doomed men; but, unwilling to give up our lives without a struggle, and retreat being now as dangerous as to stand where we were—to say nothing of the impossibility of our forsaking our wounded companions—we determined to sell our lives as dearly as possible. We therefore drew ourselves up in three parties of two each, posted behind the trees.

In this position we stood for about half an hour without any signs of further attempts from the bushrangers; they had ceased firing, and so had we; and presently afterwards they retired behind a green ridge about a hundred yards behind them, close to the water's edge.

During the fight we had seen nothing of our friend whom the bushrangers had taken with them from the Clyde; and, to tell the truth, in the urgent necessity of defeating them and of defending our own lives, we had almost forgotten that his rescue was the principal reason for the pursuit of the bushrangers. The horsemen now did good service; they served as patrols to guard our little party from surprise to the right and left, and one of them made occasional excursions to the rear to look after the natives, but it seemed they had had enough of it for the present.

Relieved from the apprehension of an immediate attack we now turned our attention to the wounded. They had contrived to drag themselves behind the big hollow log of the tree where I had placed poor Beresford, and we were relieved to find them all still living.

The course of the conflict had drawn us more to the right, and in the excitement and the noise of the firing we had not been able to pay attention to those who were hit; it was as much as we could do to defend ourselves from being massacred by the numbers against us. It was an agreeable surprise to us, therefore, to find the surgeon, with a bloody handkerchief tied round his head, as busy as possible with his patients. During his sojourn in the colony, and indeed in



the whole course of his life, he had never, he said, had such a favourable opportunity for gaining experience in gun-shot wounds.

I could not help thinking, notwithstanding our distress and peril, and the ghastly faces of the wounded, that his professional gratification at the sight of such a variety of lacerations acted like a charm on his own wound. Planting the two horsemen, and two on foot, as sentinels, we bent all our attention to the care of our suffering companions.

There was plenty of water at no great distance; we fetched some, and it refreshed them greatly. The surgeon was sadly troubled, however, at the prospect of passing the night in the open air, for there were three of them in a bad way, and he feared the cold, frosty air of the lakes would be too sharp for the sick, and we had doubts about the prudence of lighting a fire. In this occupation the remainder of the day wore away, when I saw our four dogs coming to us.

I was startled at first, for really I had never missed them, the fighting and firing having put everything else out of my head. Hector came up to me with a meaning air, as I thought, and I looked at his chops, and saw that he had assisted in the killing of a kangaroo not long before; the other dogs looked significantly about something, but they kept in the rear of Hector, paying a sort of deference to his superior sagacity and favour. It struck me that a kangaroo steamer, if we could venture to make a fire to cook it, would be no bad thing in our present circumstances, and it was agreed that I should go after it, if it did not lead me too far.

"Take my horse," said the magistrate. "If you should fall in with the natives, he will save you from a spearing, and I'll stay to help the surgeon. He wants some splints, he says, for Worrall's arm, but there's no surgical instrument maker with a shop hereabouts, I fancy."

"I have it," said the surgeon, "I have it. Where's your axe?" said he to the other constable. "Here, Tucker, chop me a strip of bark from this tree. That's right; that's a capital piece. Here," said he, cutting some longitudinal slips in it, "here's a beautiful cradle for a wounded arm! This is another wrinkle for me! I never thought when I was serving my time in Aberdeen that I should have to invent splints from the bark of a gum-tree in Van Diemen's Land! Now, my man, it's almost worth while to get one's arm shattered a bit to have it done up so nicely; that's it. Don't wince, man. Stop, give me a handkerchief, one of you, or something; there—that will make a nice soft bed for it. A little water do you want?"

"Couldn't you put a little brandy in it?"

"No—no brandy; inflammation, you know, and all that. And now for the others. Well, to be sure, I have enough to do with you all. Where have you been hurt," said he, "Mr. Nicholls?"

"Here, on the right side. I feel very faint."

"I see; but we must get out the ball; it isn't deep in. How to do it, though—that is the question—for I have not got the tools with me."

"I've got a corkscrew," said Worrall.

"A corkscrew! Why, I never did hear of balls being extracted by a corkscrew; but——"

Nicholls groaned.

Seeing that I could be of no use in this difficulty, and thinking that the meat would be a help to us, I slung my fowling-piece behind me, and throwing the horse's bridle over my arm, I set off in search of the kangaroo. I first did all that it was possible for me to do for my young friend Beresford. His left arm had been shattered by a ball, and he was suffering the most excruciating pain. The surgeon, who was much attached to him, but who, under the present circumstances, made no distinction, helping those first who most wanted assistance, now took Beresford's case in hand, and our mutual friend, the magistrate, gave him all the aid he could think of.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A NARROW ESCAPE.

THE day was drawing to a close; I judged there was a good hour and a half's daylight. I saw there was something in Hector's manner more than usual, but I set it down to the recent scrimmage with the natives, and the firing. I bid him "Go show!" He trotted on, and at about half a mile's distance he brought me to the dead kangaroo, lying not far from the lake. I did not wait to cut it up, but threw it as it was across the saddle, and was about to return to my friends, but Hector exhibited a strange unwillingness to go back, and ran on a little way in the direction from which we had come from the Clyde.

Being well acquainted with his ways, and knowing the wonderful instinct of the dog, I was uneasy; my mind being full of the fear of natives being at hand. But the signs he gave were not the signs of natives; they meant something



else. The bushrangers, I knew, were behind me, and that they could not pass our little party without an alarm being given. "Well," thought I, "the dog knows something that he seems to think I ought to know too. I'll follow him a little way at any rate;" so I threw down the kangaroo from the horse and mounted.

Hector seemed pleased at this, and knowing that I could keep up with him on horseback, he cantered off at a pretty good pace, keeping the track by which we had reached the lake. When we had gone about a mile, I stopped; but Hector still showed a great anxiety to proceed. "Well, Hector," said I, "I'll trust you, but I can't understand what you are at; if it is to go home that you're trying for, that won't do." The other three dogs had stayed by the kangaroo, which I had thrown on the ground, so that I was alone with Hector.

We had proceeded in this way about three miles, and I was beginning to think I had gone far enough, when Hector suddenly stopped, and assumed the attitude of pointing at game. "What's in the wind now?" thought I. "Is it an emu that the dog has been bringing me to? It's worth a shot, however, for the sake of the fat; but I must be wary!" I got off my horse, which I tied to a tree, and advanced stealthily in the direction to which Hector pointed. I had not proceeded more than twenty steps, when, to my surprise, and I must confess, exceeding fear, a quick sharp voice cried out—

"Who goes there?"

"More bushrangers," thought I; "now I'm in for it!"

"Who goes there?" repeated the voice, and I heard the well-known click of the cocking of a musket; it came from the direction of a thicket close by. I looked, and saw the muzzle of a musket projecting just beyond the leaves. I was in a terrible fright.

"A friend," said I, in a hurry.

"Stand, friend; if you move, I fire!"

"I'm done!" thought I; "it's all over! I shall be made a target of by those rascals, and there's the lake handy by to throw me into afterwards!"

As these horrible thoughts crossed me, I heard the peculiar sound of the shouldering of arms together by drilled soldiers, and immediately afterwards a sergeant's party showed themselves in line to the left of the thicket.

"Hurrah!" said I, jumping about in delight; "well done, Hector!"

"Hurrah! What the devil is the man hurrahing about?"

said the sergeant. "I've a notion, my friend, that the next caper you cut will be from a tight rope. Secure him! Present! There, you see, resistance is of no use. The rascal has got a beautiful fowling piece with him, stolen, of course, from some unfortunate settler."

"What the devil are you about?" said I; "you're mistaken."

"No mistake at all. There, tie his arms behind his back, —a little tighter. Two file present at him. Now, my friend, lead us on to where your other blackguards are nestling, or by —, you shall have a couple of the most beautiful balls through your rascally body that ever were cast by the king's commissioners. Lead on—I say! you won't? Fix your bayonets, and touch him up behind. Ah, that makes him move!"

"Holloa!" said I, "none of that fun; I'm not a bush-ranger, I'm after them myself. I'm a gentleman!"

The laugh that the soldiers set up at this assumption of dignity made the woods ring again.

"A gentleman! a beautiful gentleman, you are, ar'n't you? It's a pity you haven't got a glass, to see how a gentleman looks when he has taken to bushranging!"

It struck me then for the first time that my appearance might well lead the soldiers wrong as to the personal consideration which was due to my standing in the colony. I had on my bush dress, which was dirtied and stained with travel, and my hands, face, and clothes were smeared with the blood of my wounded companions, whom I had recently been assisting. In addition to these unfavourable indications my beard was of three days' growth, so that it may be easily imagined that I presented a capital likeness of a hunted bush-ranger to the eyes of the soldiers.

I might have laughed at my ludicrous position if it had not been so dangerous, for the two soldiers behind me, with cocked muskets and fixed bayonets, which seemed to have been sharpened up for my especial accommodation, kept their fingers, as I observed, and I shuddered at the sight, on their triggers, ready to treat me with the contents of their barrels at the least sign from their commander; and soldiers, I well knew, were not very particular about shooting a bushranger in the bush, and taken, as the lawyers say, *in flagrante delicto*. I was in a cold sweat, and my excessive perturbation was visible to the men.

"Look at the sneaking hound," said the sergeant; "what a desperate funk the coward is in just at the chance of



being shot! Be steady, my men, don't shoot him if you can help it. Now, my beauty, use your stumps."

"I'll take you," said I, with a sort of desperate eagerness, "to where you will find the bushrangers—and——"

"Oh—you will, will you? You're a nice fellow for a bushranger! A pretty blackguard you—to betray your comrades!"

"I don't betray anybody," said I. "I ——"

"Hold your jaw," said the sergeant, "and get on, or you shall have another spur from behind; and take care you don't think of betraying us, or you'll regret it as long as you live—though that won't be long, you may depend on it. And—hold your jaw," said he again, seeing I wanted to speak—"lead us to your comrades in silence; we don't want you to give 'em notice of our coming by your blackguard and treacherous tongue."

Compelled thus to be silent, with my arms tied behind my back, if I had been inclined to philosophise, I might have mused on the instability of human affairs; but my contemplations were interrupted by the sight of my horse with his bridle hooked over the branch of a tree.

"Oh, oh!" cried out my tormenter, "bushrangers ride a-horseback nowadays, do they? The Clyde magistrate's horse, by George! You infernal rascal! you've shot the magistrate, that's clear; and here's his gun that you stole. Don't speak; we want none of your lies. Williams, lead the horse. Oh! the villain, to shoot a magistrate! A *bush-ranger* to shoot a MAGISTRATE! That deserves double hanging! Now, don't attempt to give us any of your jaw, or we'll gag you in no time. Prick him up behind if he speaks. A murdering bushranger is not going to come over *us*, at any rate."

"A pretty situation," thought I, "for an old Surrey farmer and middle-aged gentleman to be in! After I have escaped being shot by the bushrangers, it seems that I am now more likely to be summarily executed by a sergeant's party of soldiers! Well, this is the last time that I will ever go a-hunting of bushrangers—that's certain."

All this I said to myself, for the terrible sergeant had his eyes on me, and I feared that if I opened my lips I might have a couple of balls through my body, to say nothing of the points of bayonets, the smart of whose application was uncommonly disagreeable.

In this trim we marched on. I looked round for Hector, but he had disappeared. After a three miles' march, we

came to the dead kangaroo, which the dogs for some reason had abandoned.

"Here's their dinner," said the sergeant; "and a very pretty piece of venison it is. We are right on the track, I see; there it leads. We are not far from the rascals now, I'm thinking. What say's our honest friend here? He nods his head. He's wise." (Here I rubbed myself against the tree at the place where I felt the smart of the bayonet.) "Oh, I see, he knows how to take a hint. Now for the kangaroo. Johnson, you're a clever chap with your knife. Just divide him at the loins here."

"How shall we carry him?" said one.

"Put it on the horse, to be sure," said one of the soldiers.

"On the horse!" said the sergeant; "no; you would not dirty the magistrate's saddle that way. But,—eh! it *is* dirty already, and with blood, too! That's the poor magistrate's blood! Oh, you murdering villains—won't you catch it for this? Here—stick the kangaroo on his shoulders, and let him carry it for us. Not a word! Let him feel the point of your bayonet, Steadman—that's enough! Why, it makes him dance with the kangaroo on his shoulders. Now for it—move on, my men, and keep awake—there's mischief near, by this blackguard's looks, I'm thinking."

I was straining my eyes to endeavour to discover some sign of friendly help to release me from my very disagreeable situation, and it was my gaze that attracted the attention of the vigilant sub-officer. But it was now getting dark, and I could distinguish nothing but the dim and thick foliage of the cedar-trees, and the wild and cold-looking expanse of the dreary lake. The sergeant took the lead on the track by which I, with my companions, in the morning, had followed the bushrangers to their retreat, and we presently entered the neck of land at the extremity of which we had hemmed them in.

"A likely place for a nest of vipers to lurk in," said the talkative sergeant, in a low voice; "but what do I see there? Halt! Steadman, take two file, and examine that odd-looking lump there."

Steadman departed, and reported in military style,—

"It's a dead native; he's been slashed all to pieces with broadswords. He's quite warm, and seems only just dead."

"Broadswords! natives! oh, the cruel villains, they have been killing the natives to boil them down for their fat to make bush-candles! What a horrid set! But now, silence! no more talking; let no man speak a word. We



can't be far off from the villains, for this neck of land doesn't stretch above a quarter of a mile into the lake; so now my men, be awake, for we shall have a brush presently. Now, my friend with the kangaroo, we will take the liberty to gag you; we can't have our precious lives put in jeopardy by your treachery. Open your mouth, you blackguard, or I'll wrench it open with the end of my firelock. There, now, you're quite comfortable—so move on."

We moved on accordingly, leaving the horse tied to a tree in silence, and in Indian file, the wary old sergeant using every art to surprise without being surprised. It was nearly dark, so that we came on one of our horsemen who was standing sentinel without his perceiving us, so silent and cautious were our movements. At the sight of him, at not many yards' distance, we halted; but the sentinel's horse was aware of our approach before the less acute senses of his master had distinguished us. He snorted and betrayed our advance. The horseman immediately fired one of his pistols at us, and galloped off to give the alarm.

The hind-quarters of the kangaroo on my shoulder being the most conspicuous object of the party, attracted the attention, I presume, of the horseman, for the pistol-shot struck one of the thigh-bones of the animal, and the legs being tied tight to my person, the shot knocked me and my burden down.

"There's a shot that has robbed the gallows," said the sergeant. "Don't be in a hurry, my men; take it coolly."

They had not advanced many paces, however, before they were confronted by the magistrate, with all our party who could act. I could just distinguish them as I lay on the ground, in an attitude of preparation for mutual attack. The steady discipline, however, of the military, and their habitual coolness in danger, saved both parties from a murderous discharge.

"We are a party of soldiers," said the sergeant, "and we are too strong for you. You had better surrender, and trust to the Governor's mercy."

"Hurrah!" cried out the supposed bushrangers.

"Hurrah!" said the cool old sergeant, almost inclined to be offended at this apparent insult to his dignity. "Hurrah! You're very fond of hurrahing, my fine fellows. The first thing that other chap that one of you has just shot said was hurrah! but I'm thinking——"

"It's all right," said a voice I was glad to hear; "we are friends!"

"The magistrate of the Clyde! Well, I'm glad you are

safe, but I hoped you were bushrangers. The Lord forgive me, I hope I have not made a mistake with the other man."

"What man? what do you mean?"

"Why, we got hold of a terribly ill-looking chap, I must say—one of the most ferocious-looking bushrangers I ever set eyes on; and we were bringing him along with us, when your sentinel, I suppose he was, fired off his piece and shot him. But I hope there's no harm done."

"It's Thornley, I'll be bound," said the magistrate; "where is he?"

"Oh, he's not far off."

My friends immediately came to seek me in a body. It was some little time before they could pitch upon the spot where I lay, for being gagged I was not able to respond to their inquiries. At last, however, they found me, and as it was dark, in a seemingly desperate plight. Wet with the blood of a kangaroo, which was bound tight to me, and with my arms tied behind my back, and gagged, the only signs of life that I gave was by low and hollow groans.

"He is almost gone, poor fellow," said my friends; "but let us release him from his bonds."

They untied my arms, and loosened the fastening of the kangaroo, and feeling about my face they discovered that I was gagged. I was quickly removed from this stopper; and the first thing that I remember that I said was "Take care of the kangaroo; it's the finest haunch I ever saw, and we shall want it for supper."

"Well," said the magistrate, "you can't be very bad after all, if you are wanting your supper. Come, tell us all about it."

I told them how I was mistaken for a bushranger, not forgetting the hint *a posteriori* which the soldiers had given me to hold my tongue, so that I had not an opportunity of explaining the mistake. I believe that I narrated this part of my mishap so ruefully, that it was impossible for them to resist the temptation to laugh at the mingled danger and drollery of my position, and then and there they set up such a burst of merriment as must have startled and astonished the bushrangers if they were within hearing. Being now confident in our strength, by this addition to our numbers of the party of military, we lighted a fire and cooked the kangaroo after the usual bush fashion.

"Thornley," the magistrate began to say—

"Thornley!" said the sergeant; "I've a letter for that gentleman. Sorry to be the bearer of ill news, sir, but your house and farm has been burned down. But this letter will



tell you all. There is another for a gentleman of the name of Beresford—here it is. Oh, sorry to see you've been hit, sir; but it's nothing when you are used to it. Here—let me hold this piece of lighted wood near you, that you may see to read it."

Availing myself of the same light, I read, with an anguish which it would be vain to endeavour to express, the following letter:—

"DEAREST HUSBAND,—The sad misfortune that has befallen us, and the fright and cold of the night, have so shaken me that I can scarcely write to you, and the soldiers cannot wait long for my letter, as they are in a hurry to go after the bushrangers. Thank God! there are no lives lost, but the house is burned down to the ground, and almost everything that was in it. The large wheat-stack, they tell me, is burning now. How the fire began I do not know. Dick let the horses out of the stable, so that they were saved, but the saddles and all the harness are burned or spoiled.

"The cattle were got out of the stock-yard in time; but the whole flock of merinos is dispersed in the bush. The wind was very high, and, unfortunately, the fire began at the further end, so that it embraced all the buildings except the new barn. The large pile of sawed stuff and the stock of firewood helped to do the mischief, for they caught fire early and communicated it to the house. As to trying to put out the fire with water from the pond, it was all useless. We longed for the London fire-engines. Poor Lucy Moss was the first who gave the alarm; she was awakened by the blaze of the wood-stack, and very soon afterwards the house was in flames. The men did not like to go near it, as they were frightened at the little keg of gunpowder that was brought up about a fortnight ago. We are all housed at the old stock-hut by the creek, and all our neighbours are very kind.

"It is now seven o'clock. A sergeant's party of soldiers has been sent by the Governor after these bushrangers. They saw our fire in the night, and thought it was the bushrangers who had attacked us. They were outlying on the Den Hill, about five miles from us, but they hurried to the spot, and gave us all the help they could, but help was useless against such a fire; however, it saved a few things for us. I am terribly uneasy about you, as we have heard nothing of you since you left to go in search of Mr. Moss, and I am glad, indeed, that the soldiers are going on your track. The sergeant seems a most determined fellow, but very grim-

looking; you will be glad enough when you find yourself among them. They say that if they catch hold of a bushranger they will make short work of him, for the bushrangers shot one of the soldiers at Pitt Water, and the others are very much enraged at it.

"I hope to Heaven that you get safe out of this affair, and let the soldiers go on with it, for it is their business to go after bushrangers. However, my hope is, that the soldiers may soon fall in with you, and then I do not doubt you will feel safe and comfortable. William wants to go with the soldiers to join you, but I have persuaded him to stay with us, as he is of more use here.

"The old sergeant says he *must* go now. Farewell, and Heaven protect you! Pray, try to come back directly, as there will be plenty of people to fight with the bushrangers without you, when the soldiers join your party.

"Your affectionate and anxious

"MARY THORNLEY."

While I read this disastrous intelligence by the light of the cedar-stick which the sergeant held for the wounded Beresford's accommodation, preparations were promptly made by the magistrate for a night attack on the bushrangers, in order to take them by surprise before they could be aware of the arrival of the soldiers.

What Beresford's letter contained I had no opportunity at that time of knowing, although I observed he read it over, short as it was, very earnestly two or three times, and then put it by very carefully. I was in a manner stupefied for a while by the intelligence of my wife's letter, and undetermined how to act. My first impulse was to hasten home immediately, but that was more easily said than done, for I was upwards of thirty miles from home, and the country was a desolate one to travel through, and difficult to cross. Besides, there was reason to believe that the natives were between our party and the settlements, and it was a risk of too great danger to encounter them single-handed. While I was hastily revolving these thoughts, the word was given for volunteers to step forward for the night attack.

"We don't want any volunteers for this business," said the sergeant; "you had better leave it to us, and stay where you are to take care of your wounded men. We are enough without you, and I warrant, if we come on the rascals we'll give a good account of them."

"Ah! Mr. Sergeant," said the magistrate, "you want to have all the fun to yourselves. But I think you are right



this time. I think, gentlemen, we had better stay where we are, and take care of our friends. I will go with the soldiers, because the presence of a magistrate may be useful; and do you, Worrall, come with me; you can act as a messenger, if you're wanted."

They set out accordingly, and we remained by our fire, keeping strict watch, however, and full of anxiety for the issue of the adventure. We remained in suspense about a couple of hours, when Worrall returned and reported that they could see no signs of the bushrangers. Presently afterwards the soldiers came back, and the sergeant posted some of them at intervals across the neck of land, so as to prevent the bushrangers from stealing past us in the night.

"We need not be in a hurry," said the sergeant; "we have them safe, and when the daylight comes, we can catch them like rats in a corner."

"A bent rat is a dangerous animal," said Beresford.

In this position we waited till daylight; when leaving the two horsemen to act as sentinels for the wounded party, we all proceeded to the point where we calculated the bushrangers would be found. In this expectation, however, we were disappointed; we could see no traces of them. Pursuing our search, we discovered footsteps at the water's edge, with the furrows made by the dragging of pieces of dead timber from the bank to the water. Some little bits of hide-rope were scattered here and there, as if recently cut.

"Depend upon it," said the experienced Worrall, "they have been watching us, and saw the arrival of the soldiers, and as a last shift they have made a raft of the dead timber, and floated away to the little island of snakes yonder. They could easily do it, for it is not above a quarter of a mile over. Anything to escape hanging."

"And how are we to follow them?" said the sergeant; "why, they would pick us off like cockatoos a-roosting if we were to approach them that way! But they must soon starve there for want of provisions. Well, we must keep a sharp look-out, and see what's to be done. If we had a boat now, we could venture it, though that would be a ticklish job."

"A boat!" said I; "why I know there's a boat hid somewhere hereabouts, by a party who visited the lake last year. I remember they told me it was hid at the end of a neck of land like this, on the left-hand side of the lake."

"In that case," said the magistrate, "it is very likely to be found on that peninsular that you can see about three miles off there; at any rate we can look for it. But, Thornley, you are wanting to get home, I dare say, and we can do

without you now. Take my horse, if you like, and if you think it safe to venture, which I must tell you I doubt. But, of course, you must be anxious to get home."

"There is not much of a home left for me," said I; "but I should like to get to my family as quickly as possible, and if I can trust your horse I will risk it, for I am not wanted here now."

"Oh, you may trust the horse; he will take the water like a duck—only give him his head; and you may fire from his back like an arm-chair; he will stand as steady as a rock."

"Well, then," said I, "I'll go."

So taking leave of my young friend Beresford, and bidding good-bye for the present to my companions, I left them to continue their pursuit of the bushrangers, and set out on my way home.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### MR. MOSS'S STORY.

WHEN the fight in which you were engaged (said Mr. Moss) was ended, the bushrangers retired behind the green bank by the margin of the lake. They lay close all night, but they sent out scouts to see what you were about, and when one of them came back to warn them of the arrival of the soldiers they were in a great fright not knowing what to do. Some of them proposed to make a dash through your party, but that was thought too rash; one or two who were wounded hinted the prudence of surrender, but the Gipsy, as they called him, who acted as their leader, threatened to blow out any man's brains who proposed to surrender.

"Better be shot," he said, "like men, than be hanged like dogs."

Two of the bushrangers had been seafaring men, and they proposed that we should swim over to the little island that was not more than some few hundred yards from the shore.

"And what's to become of our arms and of the wounded?" said the Gipsy.

"Oh!" said they, "make a little raft, and put our arms and clothes on the top of it, and then swim and push it over; there's no tide, and the lake is as smooth as glass."

"A capital plan," said the Gipsy; "we'll do it—and then we can defy the murdering villains that are after us; for



if they attempt to get at us, we shall have all the advantage of firing at them under cover."

The bushrangers were not long in putting this scheme in execution. All the time you were watched by two scouts, and they saw you sitting by your fire and enjoying yourselves; but it was not their game to excite your attention. The rogues worked hard, and by launching some dry logs into the lake, which they lashed together with bullock-hide, they soon made a sufficient raft for that purpose.

"Now," said the Gipsy, "are you all ready? But I forgot—can you all swim?"

Three of them, who had been mechanics of some sort, declared that they could not swim a stroke.

"Here's a mess!—Well, I tell you what you must do, my fine fellows; you must hold on in the water by the raft—that will keep you from sinking. But what shall we do with our prisoner?"

"Oh, let him go—he'll only be in the way!"

"No, no; we'll keep him, we may find a use for him yet. Now, sir, can you swim?"

"No," said I—for the thought struck me of a stratagem to escape—"and I hope you will not expose me to the risk of being drowned."

"Oh, you must take your chance; it's no worse to be drowned than be hanged; so strip, mister, and bundle into the water."

I took off my clothes, and the scouts having been withdrawn, and the whole party collected, we advanced towards the water.

"Stop," said one of the sailors; "how much line can we make by putting it altogether?"

By a general contribution of neckcloths, garters, cords, and bullock-hide, they made a line of about a hundred and fifty yards in length.

"What's this for?" said the Gipsy.

"You'll see the use of it presently," said the sailor. "Now for it;" and we all got into the water.

"Where's the prisoner?" said the Gipsy.

"Alongside me," said the other sailor; "he's all safe."

In this manner the swimmers slowly and with great difficulty pushed forward the raft, those who could not swim, and I, pretending not to be able to swim, holding on. They had reached the middle of the passage, or a little more, when the sailor to the right said to the one by me—

"Mate, take the end of the line and swim to the shore, I think it will reach it now, and then haul on gently, and that

will quicken our work, and lighten it too, for it's getting more than we can do. Be alive, for this is too hard work to last long."

My near companion quitted me with much alacrity, glad to be relieved from his share of the toiling of propelling the clumsy woodwork, and shortly afterwards I felt that the raft was being hauled in from the shore.

The attention of the bushrangers around being distracted from me by this circumstance, I took advantage of the opportunity, and quietly dropped under water, for I had been taught to swim, as a necessary part of my education in early youth ; and I was as confident in the water, so long as my strength lasted, as on dry land.

On this occasion I had need of all my skill. My limbs were torpid and benumbed from inaction in the water and by the exposure of my hands and arms to the cold night air. I may add, that all the bushrangers complained of the piercing coldness of the lake-water, and there was a terrible chattering of teeth among the holders-on before I left them.

Well—I dropped quietly under water, taking care to keep my head, as I thought, towards the shore of the mainland ; and although my limbs were almost paralysed by the cold, I contrived by a vigorous effort to strike out for nearly half a minute under water,—there's no knowing what a man can do till his life is at stake,—and when I came to the surface, I had the satisfaction to find that I was at a fair distance from the raft.

I swam on lustily, but in my hurry, and, I suppose, anxiety and confusion of mind, instead of swimming towards the mainland, I swam towards another island, which in the darkness I mistook for it. This island was nearly a mile from the spot that I quitted, and being deceived as to its distance, I expected to reach it without much effort, and I nearly exhausted myself by quick swimming before I was much more than half-way over.

Fortunately, there was not a breath of air stirring, and the water was quite smooth, but bitterly cold. I rested in the water for some seconds, but the cold was so piercing that I was afraid of cramp ; so I struck out again and worked hard. I reached the shore of the island at last, but I was so completely exhausted that I could hardly stand. The morning now began to break, and I perceived that I was about half a mile from a low point of land which ran out from the main shore into the lake.

I was too tired to venture into the water again, and I assure you that my situation was a very awkward one indeed



I kept running up and down for some time to keep myself warm, and at last I thought I might as well be drowned as die of cold where I was, so I plunged into the water again, and made an effort to reach the opposite shore.

I had got little more than half-way across, when my strength failed me, and I began to sink slowly into the water. I gave myself up for lost, and I began to utter that which I considered my last prayer, when I felt my foot strike against the ground; the water reached to my chin, and I was just saved! I cautiously waded on, fearing to fall into some hole every moment; but the water grew shallower and shallower, and the sand beneath my feet was firm and even, and I arrived at the dry land.

Without losing a moment, I set off to the point where I expected to find my friends; I met them on their way to the concealed boat. They were much astonished, as you may suppose, at the sight of a creature that evidently was not a kangaroo, but that was similarly unencumbered by any article of dress. But matters were soon explained, and they had a fine laugh at the joke, when I told them how I had escaped. There was a friendly subscription of articles of apparel, to which the slain bushrangers were made to contribute more efficiently.

"Well- and did you find the boat?"

We found the boat in pretty good condition, with a couple of sculls in her. We soon launched her, and then it was debated what should be our mode of attack. The old sergeant — what a grim old fellow he is! — proposed that we should attack them on three sides at once, and make two rafts to assist us.

"If we go all together in a huddle in this little boat," said he, "they will fire at us in a heap, and we shall have no chance, at least not without great loss, and that we should endeavour to avoid; whereas, by firing from three points at once, we shall distract their attention, and those in the boat may dash in and charge them. Of course, we soldiers will go in the boat; it will just hold us and no more."

"I don't like your lives to be risked even in this way," said the magistrate. "I think the safer plan will be to starve them out. We gain nothing by exposing our lives unnecessarily in a conflict with hardened felons and murderers: they can do no harm where they are, and they must be starved out at last. We can keep a strict watch on them by the aid of our boat, and my opinion is, some of them will get tired of being starved, and will betray the rest."

"Just as you please, sir," said the sergeant; "its all one

to us ; but I should like to make a dash at 'em, the cowardly scoundrels ! to murder a soldier in cold blood ! and fire at his back ! But if these rascals were to put another dodge on us, and steal off while we are looking on, there would be a fine laugh against us when we got back to Camp. We don't mind doing it alone rather than not do it at all—what do you say, my men ; shall we try the boat ? ”

“ Ay, ay,” said the men ; “ we can fire close, and they can never stand it ; besides, we can fire three times to their one, as they have to load from their powder-horns, while we have our cartridges. Better have it over at once, and rap at them while we can.”

“ Well,” said the magistrate, “ I have my doubts ; but it certainly is of importance to secure these desperate fellows, and it would not be pleasant to have the laugh against us if they escape ; so let us set about it without losing time.”

We all set to work, and we were busy constructing our raft when Crab and your man appeared on horseback.

“ Yes,” said Crab, “ we tracked you to the place where you had the first fight, and then we easily tracked you on to the boat. And such a set of mad fellows I never saw before in all the days of my life ; one would have thought you were going to have a frolic instead of a deadly fight with desperate men ; but this horrid country makes all the people mad, and mad they must have been to come to it, and madder to stop in it—that's my opinion ! ”

“ Mr. Crab entertains peculiar views,” said Moss, “ and he has his own way of expressing himself ; but to proceed with my story—that is, if I am not making it too long.”

“ Not a bit,” said I ; “ we have nothing to do but to hear it ; and, as I was at the beginning of the fray, I should like to hear the end of it.”

Well, then (said Moss), we worked hard all that day, but we could not construct anything to our minds as a fighting raft. Half the soldiers were despatched to keep watch on the part of the shore which we had quitted, and which was nearest to the island. We passed the night as usual, but we had plenty of fires to keep the cold off. Next day we finished our raft, which we launched into the water. It was then towed by the boat towards the island. When we approached within range, a musket-shot was fired from the shore, which we observed fell short of the boat in the water, but we saw no one on the beach.

“ This will never do,” said the magistrate ; “ we shall all be picked off this way.”

He then called out to the sergeant to go back, which was



done, and we returned to the land to the point from which the bushrangers had started the morning before. We all went on shore again, and consulted what should be done. We were engaged in this deliberation when we were agreeably surprised by the appearance of a corporal's party of soldiers, and presently afterwards by a bullock-cart drawn by four bullocks, and bearing another boat, which had been despatched from Hobart Town to the lake, as it was guessed such an assistance might be wanted. This boat was larger and stronger than the one we had found, and being thus provided, and our strength being reinforced by the addition of the corporal's party, it was at once resolved that we should force the bushrangers in their retreat by a simultaneous attack on different points. The sergeant took the command of one boat, and the magistrate of the other.

We were just shoving off from the shore when a messenger on horseback arrived from Hobart Town, bearing a letter from the Governor to the magistrate, which of course we stopped to read, as the despatch was marked "Important and Immediate." The magistrate having read it over to himself, said that as its contents concerned us all, he would read it aloud, which he did to the effect that the Government empowered the magistrate to offer that the bushrangers' lives should be spared, with the exception of the actual murderers, on the condition of their surrendering themselves. It became their duty to make the clemency of the Government known to them, and to give them this chance of saving their lives.

There was some murmuring at this, and it was contended that no terms ought to be kept with villains who had committed outrages and atrocities so horrible as these had done; but the magistrate was firm in his sense of his duty, and declared that he was determined to give effect to the merciful intentions of the Government.

"But how are we to acquaint them with it?" said the sergeant; "they will be sure to fire on us if we approach them in a body; and I don't suppose that any one of us is inclined to go alone into their den of wolves!"

"I will not ask anyone to do my duty for me," said the magistrate; "I shall take one of the constables with me to pull the boat, and go alone, and without arms; my mission will be a mission of peace and mercy, and I must take my chance of the rest. Come, Worrall," said he, "step into the boat and pull me over."

"I'm a bad hand at pulling," said Worrall, "and besides, they have a particular spite against me, and would skin me

alive if they could get at me; not that I mind, only I would rather anybody else did the job this time."

"You can pull a long face," said the sergeant, "at any rate; but one of us can go, if his honour pleases."

"No, no," said the magistrate; "Worrall is the proper man; it is right that he should attend me in his official capacity."

It was with the most ludicrous reluctance that Worrall proceeded to exercise his official functions on this disagreeable occasion; and as his face was turned towards us as he sat in the boat with the sculls in his hands, the dolorous countenance of that usually facetious individual raised a general shout of laughter.

"I know," said Worrall, in most lugubrious accents, "I'm booked; I shall be riddled like a sieve! Ah! you may laugh, but how would you like it yourselves? And the bushrangers always put jagged balls in their guns out of spite; as if smooth ones would not do as well!"

"Give me a stick—and tie something white—a handkerchief, or something to it, that we may not run any useless risk. That will do—now shove us off—and—Worrall—what's the matter with the man? Give way! the sooner we are there, the sooner it will be over."

"Well," said Mr. Crab, "if you don't like to be shot yourself, you needn't disgust other people with it! What made you stay in this horrid country? It's your own fault for stopping in it, where there's nothing but wild bushrangers and savage natives to murder and devour you—that's my opinion!"

"Oh!" groaned Worrall, "it will be all over soon enough!"

The boat proceeded languidly on its way, feebly propelled by exceedingly slow strokes, the sculls, as we observed, rising perpendicularly into the air, and descending again in a straight line into the water, thereby causing the least possible motion to the boat which bore the wretched Worrall to his miserable doom, who ever and anon looked over his shoulder towards the anticipated spot of his expected sacrifice, ducking his head occasionally with a quick and frantic motion, to avoid the shots which his fears suggested were being aimed at him. The magistrate, who was standing up in the boat with the white flag in his hand, at last seized hold of Worrall's almost paralysed hands, and forcing him to row, by a few vigorous stokes the boat was soon forced into the mid-channel.

We now observed the bushrangers assembling on the beach.



of the island in order of fighting, and with their arms in their hands. As the boat approached the shore we saw the magistrate wave his white flag in one hand, while in the other he held up the open letter which he had received from the Governor. The boat now neared the shore and became stationary, but we could not hear what passed.

"I will supply that deficiency," said the magistrate. "I confess I did not feel very comfortable as we approached the spot where the bushrangers were assembled, and when I felt that my life was in their power; but I lost no time in telling them of the merciful offer of the Governor. Worrall had laid himself down at the bottom of the boat, which I saw excited the bushrangers' suspicions; I made him get up, therefore; and when they caught sight of his face, there was a general shout of anger, and more than one piece was levelled at him. I put up my hand and appealed to their honour, and said that I trusted myself among them in order to save life; that I was bound to do my duty, and that I could not better evince my desire to save them from the consequences of their holding out than by my present act in confiding to their good feelings. I am inclined to think that my eloquence would not have saved me from their murderous inclinations if it had not been for their leader, who really is a fine fellow, and I should like to save him if I could. Some of the rascals called out 'Treachery!' and pointed their guns at me, but their leader (the Gipsy) stopped them, and he and I had a parley together. I should say that I observed evident signs in some of them of an inclination to submit themselves.

"'Will all our lives be spared?' said the Gipsy, 'if we surrender?' 'Not all,' said I; 'but all except those who actually committed the murders with which you are charged.' 'But we are all in for it,' said he, 'and we must stand or fall together; we won't agree to have some picked out from the rest to be hanged in Camp yonder!' 'I cannot engage,' said I, 'that all your lives shall be spared; but your immediate and quiet surrender would no doubt go far in your favour.' 'Let us hear that part of the Governor's letter read to us word for word,' said the Gipsy.

"I read it to them from beginning to end, but they shook their heads at it.

"'It won't do,' said the Gipsy; 'we may as well be shot as hanged. But you see we are well armed and prepared for you. We don't wish to do you any harm; I believe you mean well to us; but if you attack us you must take the consequence. We will fight it out to the death. What say

you, my men, shall it be life or death with us?' 'Ay, Ay,' said the men; 'no surrender, no surrender!'

"I thought my position was getting ticklish, for the bushrangers were working themselves up to a pitch of savage fury. I, therefore, thought of the best mode of retiring.

" 'I will give you,' said I, 'another hour to consider of the offer of the Governor; if before the end of that time you will consent to submit, hold up a bough by the water's edge, which we shall be able to see from the other side. I leave you now, hoping that you will consider the merciful offer of the Governor, and take advantage of this chance of saving your lives.' So saying, and without waiting for a reply, I immediately took the sculls and pulled back; and glad enough was I to escape so well, I can assure you. And now, Moss, do you tell the rest."

We waited till the expiration of the hour (said Moss), but we observed that the bushrangers were very busy with the dead wood, and with boughs of trees, which they cut down and dragged to the shore, to form, as it seemed, a shelter behind which they might defend themselves, and at the end of the time we saw one of them holding the bough of a tree in his hand, which he waved about.

"They have agreed to surrender," said the magistrate; "don't you see the signal which we agreed on?"

"Not a bit of it," said the old sergeant; "those fortifications have not been run up for nothing; the treacherous devils, they show us that branch as a feint, depend upon it, to put us off our guard. But I think we may take advantage of their own strategem, and by pretending to be deceived, we shall be able to deceive them. Now, sir," said he to the magistrate, "will you be ruled by me for this once? I'm an old Peninsula campaigner, and have had some experience in the bush with the Yankees, and I'm up to their manœuvres."

"With all my heart," said the magistrate; "what do you propose to do?"

"Why, this is what I propose. First, do you get into the boat again with Worrall, as if you saw and understood their signal, and relied upon their meaning to surrender. When you are sure they have seen you do this, then come back, as if you had determined on some other plan of receiving their submission. Now look at the wind! You see it blows from us to them pretty smartish. Let all of us hoist white flags or boughs of trees; they will see us from the other side, and they will think we are sure of their surrendering quietly, and so being deceived, if they mean treachery, we shall be



able to circumvent them. Now you see the wind, as I said, blows from us to them. We must make a large fire, as if for cooking, and to make it look as if we had abandoned all thoughts of fighting."

"How will that help us?" said the magistrate.

"Why, you see, when we make a good fire, we can make at the same time a good smoke, and smoke enough to hide us from the view of the bushrangers."

"And what will you do then?"

"Let one boat go straight forward, making all the noise you can to fix their attention, while the other steals round to the side of the island. We soldiers will go in that, and take them in flank, and then we shall have them nicely; and while they are engaged with us you can push on and land, and so they will be between two fires."

"Good!" said the magistrate; "a capital scheme—that is, if you can make smoke enough."

"Oh, let me alone for that," said the sergeant; "I learnt that trick long ago in America; I'll warrant I'll make a smoke that a man can't see a pot of beer through it."

The sergeant's plan was immediately carried into execution. We collected a quantity of dead leaves, which at this season of the year are damp and difficult to inflame. We first made a fire as usual, and then proceeded to light others along the shore, taking care to smother them with dead leaves, which raised plenty of smoke, which the wind carried over the water in the direction of the island. We then manned the boats, and pursuing the plan of the sergeant, made as much noise as possible in pulling over. In the meantime, under cover of the smoke, the second boat, with the sergeant and his party, made the best of its way to the side of the island. When we came within speaking distance, a voice hailed us:

"What the devil do you kick up such a smoke for?"

"The wood by the side of the lake is damp and will not burn. We saw your signal, and we are come to receive your surrender."

"Surrender be —! More fools you to suppose we were going to give ourselves up to be hanged like sheep in a slaughter-house. Take that for your folly."

At these words a volley was fired at us, but we were prepared for it, and by falling down in the boat we escaped it altogether, the shots, in the obscurity of the smoke, going over our heads. Without returning the fire, we immediately pulled off, and when we had got to a safe distance we began to fire, to distract the attention of the bushrangers from the

second boat. We continued to fire for some minutes till the smoke cleared away, and then we had the satisfaction to see that the boat with the soldiers had succeeded in getting round a point of land which concealed them from the sight of the bushrangers.

"The murderous and treacherous rascals!" muttered Worrall, "they deserve to be punished for this villainous treachery. Lucky we were to escape from them, but I suppose the Gipsy thought he should secure our destruction best by this trick."

"Now," said the magistrate, "we may calculate the soldiers have landed. Let us pull in shore and be ready to second them. Fire as fast as you can till we get close in, and then let half reserve their fire. There are the soldiers stealing round! The bushrangers don't see them yet! They little expect an attack from that quarter! Now, my friends, fire away! Keep it up. There go the soldiers! Give way!—pull—pull—reserve your fire! There go the soldiers again! The rascals are puzzled. They don't know what to make of it. Pull away! Pull away!"

We were not long in reaching the shore, and the bushrangers, being engaged with their unexpected enemy, seemed panic-struck. They fired at the soldiers, but without vigour and without aim. In the meantime we were upon them on the other side; and the soldiers, fixing their bayonets, without hesitating charged in among them.

We got up to them at nearly the same time, and stopped their retreat. They were so bewildered by the suddenness of the unexpected attack of the soldiers that they made but little resistance, with the exception of the Gipsy and another man, who, seeing that their game was lost, darted into the wood. Thinking that we had them safe within the island we first turned our attention to the securing of those we had got, whom we bound hand and foot before they had time to recover from their panic. Three of them lay dead from the fire of the soldiers, and several were slightly wounded.

"Where's their leader?" cried the magistrate.

"He has escaped for the present; but we are sure to have him at last."

"The boat," said the sergeant: "the boat on the other side—look to it."

It was too late. The Gipsy had been too quick for us. We saw him above a couple of miles from the shore, pulling with his companion with all their might to the mainland.

"There they go," said Crab; "and all that we have done is of no use, and I have got one of their buckshot through



my arm ; more fool I for going after them. What have I to do with fighting bushrangers ? And there go the two greatest rogues of the lot ; they were the ringleaders and the stirrers up of all the mischief ; and all our work is to do over again. I'll be bound before night they'll commit a dozen murders at least. Well, this is making a silly end of it—that's my opinion !”

“Corporal,” said the sergeant, “lose no time ; you must put yourself on their tracks ; you and your party will be enough for those two. I will take care of the prisoners.”

“Put the corporal's party on shore,” said the magistrate to the two constables, “where the other boat lands. You can then return and tow it back with you.”

Worrall and his fellow constables stepped into the boat, and the corporal, making the usual military salaam, departed with his men in pursuit of the terrible Gipsy. When they returned, we all crossed over to the mainland, much to the joy of our friend Beresford and the relief of the Government messenger. We immediately set off on our return to the Clyde, when to our surprise we learnt that you had not yet arrived. We feared that you had been killed by the natives, but Crab insisted on immediately going in search of you, as he said you might be lamed or lost in the bush.

Information was brought to us that the magistrate's horse, on which you had started from the lake, had returned home lame and without saddle or bridle. This increased our fears for your safety, and we had no difficulty in mustering a sufficient party to aid you in case of danger. Thank God we found you when we did.

“It was just in time,” said I.

“It was, indeed ; but that's over now ; and when you get home to your family, you will soon recover yourself and get things to-rights again.”

With this we turned ourselves to sleep, and I slept soundly. The morning light found me refreshed and restored, and I roused up the party to lose no time in crossing the river. We found a fording-place higher up, and crossed without accident. Beresford placed himself by my side, and we strode cheerfully on.

After a sharp march of some miles we passed the Shannon, and I began to feel myself again. . . .

“What has become of poor Lucy Moss ?” said I. “It was you who saved her life on that awful night. When we left her on our expedition to the lake she had not recovered consciousness. Is she still alive ?”

"Miss Moss has to thank your wife for her recovery," said Beresford, "more than me. But look here! Did you ever see such a shot? That cockatoo on the end of the branch of the tree there!"

"Never mind the cockatoo, man," said I; "we have had shooting enough for one bout: let the cockatoo alone. Well, poor girl, I hope she is grateful to you for her life, when you carried her in your arms on that terrible night that we found her lying on the trunk of the tree over the Clyde! It is not every one that would have perilled his life by scrambling along that tree like an opossum, as you did; and I remember how very kind you were! and when we offered to help you, you said the poor girl was not in the least heavy, and I suppose—— But bless the man, what's the matter with him? you are not going to faint, are you? and what makes you turn so red in that odd way."

"It's my arm," said he, "that gives me a twinge now and then."

"Oh!—is it? and who has done it up so nicely? There's been a woman's hand in this, I'll swear. Was it my wife that sewed on all these little black ribbons so prettily—eh?"

"It was not Mrs. Thornley who did it exactly——"

"Exactly! What, had anybody else a hand in it?"

"Not particularly—that is, not altogether; but Mrs. Thornley had the kindness to hold my arm—while—while—I think it was Miss Moss who sewed on the ties."

"Oh! it was; and who——"

"There's the Clyde at last," said Beresford. "Look—cast your eyes just over that bare branch of the high gum tree—don't you see the water? It can't be more than four miles from us!"

"You seem to be in a particular hurry to get back. Nothing wrong about your affairs, I hope?"

"Oh, dear no! The truth is, that—that—I want—that is—that I'm anxious——"

"Anxious to do what?"

"To see how your men—that is, my men—have got on with the hedging and ditching since I've been away."

"Indeed!" said I.

I did not make any further observation to my young friend, who suddenly quitted my side, but I thought a good deal, and I said to myself—"I've seen many curious things in my time, but I never knew a young fellow in such a hurry to see a hedge and a ditch before!"

But I was now drawing nearer and nearer to home, and that feeling put out of my head all other thoughts. The



loud and joyous shouts of our party proclaimed from a distance their approach and their success. In a moment I crossed the memorable tree across the river, and found myself once more in the embraces of my wife and children.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE BULL AND BETSY.

THAT evening of my reception was one of joy and thankfulness. But a sort of brain fever was the consequence of the excitement to which I had been exposed, which confined me for many days to my bed.

When I recovered sufficiently to attend to my affairs, I found that I had in a great measure to begin again the work of a settler in the country; but industry and perseverance will conquer most difficulties; so I set about repairing my disasters with a stout heart, and as we all worked willingly we worked cheerfully, stimulated by the feeling that we were working for ourselves, and that every improvement that we made—every stone that we laid—and every stick that we planted was on our own land, and for the benefit of ourselves and our children.

My first care was to look after my sheep; for that was my main stock, and what I most depended on. I had the mortification to find that my home flock of merinoes had got dispersed in the bush, but my three other flocks at their different runs, consisting of about three thousand, were safe. It took some time to recover my merinoes, for they had strayed away, and had become mixed with the sheep of various neighbours, but I got them nearly all together again after a short time. As to the tame cattle, they were gathered in by degrees, but it cost my horses severe work to get in the wild herds, with which they were mixed.

The worst part of the business was the loss by fire at home, of furniture, bedding, books, and indeed of almost everything that the old cottage and the adjacent buildings contained. But there were no lives lost, and that was a great consolation.

My friend Moss was re-established in his log-hut on the other side of the river, and I heard that young Beresford was particularly attentive in giving them the benefit of his assistance in putting their little farm to-rights, and my daughter Betsy, then sixteen years of age, and inclined to be

saucy occasionally, told me very demurely that "Mr. Beresford was so very kind! that he was there every day, showing Miss Moss how to plan her little flower-garden, which must be an exceedingly difficult thing to do," Betsy remarked, "on the other side of the river, as the flower-garden did not seem to make much progress, although her instructor was always explaining to her from morning to night something or other about it."

This was said in such a sly way, that I looked on Betsy with eyes which betokened some little surprise at her observations; and it suddenly struck me that eight years had passed away since I first came to the Clyde, and that my eldest daughter, now sixteen years of age, was assuming the airs of womanhood.

My son William, too, who had reached his eighteenth year, had lately been throwing out hints on the propriety of his making a visit to Hobart Town to purchase razors. I had put a stop to that sort of presumption some time before by gravely offering him a cart and four bullocks to bring up a razor for him, but I felt that these pretensions would at no distant time assume a character which required care and consideration, and that it was incumbent on me to provide for them in time. These thoughts acted as further stimulants to my exertions.

It was on a bright frosty morning in that same month of June, 1824, that I summoned Crab to a cabinet council on the subject of our projected new house. I was inclined to try a new mode of building which had lately been introduced in the colony, under the name of *pisé* building, and which seemed to answer very well, and in places where brick or stone building was expensive, formed a very good substitute.

In this way, in a very short time, a capital house may be raised by very simple means, and with cheap materials to be found everywhere, and not requiring the skill of a bricklayer or stone-mason; and in a short time the wall becomes as hard as stone, and of the same apparent solidity, so that a pickaxe will not make much more impression on a wall so built than on a block of stone. This was the sort of house that I contemplated building for our new dwelling.

"This is a bad job, Crab," I began, "but it might have been worse; there have been no lives lost from this sad fire, that is one great consolation; but we can't live without a house; the point to be settled is, what sort of one we shall build. You have seen a good deal of these new sort of houses at Pitt Water, what do you think of them?"

Now it must be premised that Mr. Crab had become a



very important personage in the district of the Clyde. Seven years before, I had prevailed on him to purchase with his small capital a hundred ewes heavy with lamb, and to put them out "on thirds;" which he did with an honest settler on the other side, the Launceston side, of the island.

As the keeper of the sheep was to have one-third of their produce to reimburse him for his care and expense, two-thirds remained for the owner; and as Crab consumed none, and sold little of the increase, excepting for the purpose of replacing the wethers with breeding ewes, in the course of seven years Crab's original one hundred ewes had increased, notwithstanding theft and all sorts of losses, to two flocks of sheep of above one thousand each, which he had established on separate runs, to the eastward of Salt Pan Plains. He had continued to live with me in my house, and was considered, as he considered himself, a part of the family, and maintained his authority as the autocrat of the ploughs and corn-fields.

I must add, that having now attained the age of sixty-eight, he had become more obstinate in his opinions than ever, and my recent calamities, which he declared he had all along foreseen and expected, confirmed him in his conviction of his superior penetration and sagacity.

"What do you think, Crab," said I, "of running up a piss house? It's easily done, and we can do it with the men we have got about us."

Crab slowly raised himself from the log of a tree on which he was sitting, and placing on the rough table of gum-tree boards his two hard and brown hands, he inclined his head a little forwards to me, and with much solemnity replied:

"And is it possible, Mr. Thornley, that you are thinking of building another house in this miserable place? Have you not had warning enough, by bushrangers, and by natives, and by fires, to show you the wrongness of all that you have done? And eight years ago, in this very place, did I not tell you what would happen? and hasn't it happened? And now you are thinking of beginning it all over again? Why, it's a mere tempting of Providence!"

"Oh, papa," said Betsy, "do let us go back to England. Since all this work about the bushrangers and natives, I declare I'm quite frightened; and besides, there's not a shop near us, one must send to Hobart Town for everything; and if one wants a new riband for a bonnet, a bullock cart must be sent fifty miles for it! The idea of bringing up a new bonnet in a cart drawn by four bullocks!"

"Nonsense! Betsy," said William; "what do you want

with new bonnets up here, where there are nothing but cows and sheep to see you? ("Ain't there, though?" I thought Betsy muttered). To be sure it's awkward not to have a boot-maker near, and if you want any trifle done to your gun, you must take it to town. That certainly is a nuisance."

"Miss Betsy is a very sensible young lady," said Crab, "and I think the best thing to be done is for us all to go home again to England, and there we can have a nice little farm, and in Shropshire I know many that are to be got at a low rent."

"Rent!" said I; "that word would be a settler, Crab, if there was no other argument against it. Thank Heaven! we have done with rent! Our land is our own; we are our own masters; depending on our own exertions for prosperity and fortune!"

"A pretty prosperity has come of it!" said the indomitable Crab. "It's a very prosperous state of affairs, isn't it, when a man is shot at day after day by bushrangers, and gets lost in the bush, and is hunted by the natives—and—I ask you, now, master, whether, in your conscience, you can deny that you ought at this moment to be a roasted man?"

"A roasted man!" said my wife. "Good heaven! Mr. Crab, what odd ideas you have!"

"But I'm not roasted yet," said I, "and excepting that clip which the native's womera gave me on the leg, I'm not much the worse for it. And by-the-bye, Crab, how do your sheep get on beyond the Salt Pan Plains! Why, you will have more sheep in a short time than you will know what to do with. What would you do with them in England? It would require a good bit of land to feed two thousand sheep; and then the rent! No rent to pay here—eh!"

"Eh!" said Crab—"ah! but it is better to pay rent and have your property safe, than pay it in the shape of bushrangers, sheep-stealing, and burning, and such like."

"That's a drawback," said I, "it must be confessed; but still, my friend Crab, with all these drawbacks, and in spite of all the inconveniences and disadvantages of this wretched country, as you call it, you have contrived to make two thousand sheep out of one hundred in seven years! I am inclined to think that you would not have got together a flock of two thousand sheep in England in that time, or in any time."

"May be not," said Crab—"may be not; but then in England you can sleep in your bed without getting up next morning and finding your throat cut, or your house burnt about your ears. Well, well—a wilful man must have his



way! I suppose you must wait for another disaster worse than this before you'll hear reason; but the end will come at last, and then you'll regret you did not take my advice."

"Come, give us your advice about a pisé house, as you have seen some of them and I have not; will they do?"

"Do! Lord bless you—never think of making a mud-pie and calling it a house. Who ever heard of patting mud up into a heap, and then setting a roof on it? Why, it must crumble to pieces or be washed away by the first rain that comes. But why talk of a mud house when you have plenty of stone on your own land?"

"Yes; but stonemason's work is so very expensive in this country, and such a house would take so long in building."

"Of course it would; everything is very expensive in this country; but you should have thought of that before you came into it. But the stone house that I mean is one which you might build of the same sort of stone that the old chimney of the cottage was built of; only to be done in a more slightly manner. Why, you might build a house a hundred feet long for a few hundred pounds, that would really be a place fit for a gentleman to live in, and which some new fool of a settler, with plenty of money, would buy, perhaps, when you went back to England. And I'll tell you what I'll do," continued Crab in his enthusiasm: "I've too many sheep by a great deal for me to look after. I'll sell one of the flocks, and that shall build the new house for you, and I'll start to Salt Pan Plains about it this very day."

"Indeed," said I, "you will do no such thing."

"And why not, pray? can't I do as I like with my own sheep?"

"You may do as you like with your own sheep, but you shall not sell them to build our house; there will be about fifteen hundred pounds due to me in another month, which I shall not lend again, so that I shall have plenty of money, for house, furniture, and all."

"Well," said Crab, considering a little, "perhaps it's as well; it will be all the same in the end, and you would only lose your money by lending it. Very well; the sheep are sure to increase if you leave them alone. So now to find a good stone-quarry."

"Let us all go," said my wife; "the day is beautiful. I want to see Mrs. Moss on the other side of the river, and you can help us over Lucy's Bridge, and leave us in Mrs. Moss's cottage."

"Come, then," said I; "where's my fowling-piece? and, Will, do take yours."

"Why, what on earth," said Crab, "do you want with your guns?—you are not going a mile from home."

"Perhaps not; but there's no harm in taking them with us."

"My fowling-piece is dirty," said William; "but here's a musket clean, with the bayonet all ready fixed; and here's a cartouche-box of cartridges."

"A pretty place to live in!" said Crab; "to go a-seeking for a stone-quarry with muskets and fixed bayonets!"

"It's always best to be prepared," said I; "and, to my thinking, precaution betokens courage, as it shows the calculation of danger, and the predetermination to face it."

Van Diemen's Land abounds in stones of all sorts, and especially in a sort of stone which easily splits into flakes; it is commonly used to build the chimney of a log house, where bricks and lime are not easy to be had. It is not so sightly as bricks, but it answers the purpose very well, and almost anything in the shape of mud serves for a cement. There was plenty of this sort of stone on my land; indeed, too much of it, enough to build a town, and on one rise there were so many fine flat slabs of stone lying on the surface, that it made one long to find a use for them.

The object of our search was to find a quarry of stone easy to be worked, near the intended site of the house, so as to avoid the expense and trouble of carting. But first we proceeded in a body to the other side of the river, passing in single file over the trunk of the tree which had now obtained the name of "Lucy's Bridge;" Crab brought up the rear, with a crowbar over his shoulder, which it pleased him to carry on this occasion, for the purpose of raising specimens of the stone.

We found our friends busy about their cottage, which, at Mrs. Moss's request, our diligent neighbour was carefully fortifying. The inside was hardly large enough to contain us all, so we proceeded in a body to the new garden, which Miss Moss, with great taste, had planned near the river.

"Bless me!" said Betsy, "why, I declare Miss Moss has *two* gardeners to assist her; there's Mr. Beresford sitting on the log of a tree, working dreadfully hard indeed, and explaining, I suppose, something or other; and there's another helping him, only he's too far off to join in the conversation, with a gun over his shoulder. That's a stranger; I wonder who he can be!"

Our approach interrupted young Beresford's dissertation on



horticulture, and he came forward with a very red face to greet us, while Miss Moss immediately began to rake about the earth desperately. "Rather cold work," said I, "to be idle! The month of June is not the season to sit still in the open air. A good fire and the inside of a house would be more comfortable."

"I thought it was very pleasant," said Beresford.

"So it appeared," said I; "but I can't stop to talk this morning. We are going to look for stone to build our new house. Who is that young stranger? He is very like you."

"That's my brother. You know I have been expecting him some months. He came up here a week ago."

"What is his age? He is younger than you."

"He is nineteen—four years younger than I am. He has got terrible notions in his head about natives and bushrangers, and nothing on earth will induce him to part with his gun; he eats, drinks, and sleeps with it."

As my friend thus spoke, the stranger advanced and saluted us with a very good air, and I was prepossessed in his favour at once by his modest and unassuming manner. I am inclined to think that there was another of the party who regarded him with favourable eyes; but of this I shall have to speak in its proper place.

"Who's for a walk?" said I. "Come, Beresford, man, don't sit on that log all day; a brisk walk will do you good."

"I would go with you with all my heart; but the truth is, I have promised Miss Moss to show her how to trench the ground for Indian corn."

"Trench ground for Indian corn in June! Well, that's a new idea, at any rate. You don't mean to say that you are going to sow Indian corn in the middle of the winter?"

"Sow it! No—not to sow it, but there's nothing like being prepared in time."

"Right there," said I; "and as you like to prepare in time, had you not better come with us and look out for a convenient stone-quarry, for it seems to me you'll soon be wanting a larger house than your present one?"

Miss Moss, at this recommendation, worked away with her rake again with great energy; but she had the courage to say, "The surgeon, Mr. Beresford, desired you not to use your arm; and you know he said that any exertion would be dangerous. But, pray, don't let me keep you from joining your friends. I have plenty to do inside the cottage."

So saying she bid us a hasty adieu, and we proceeded on our walk. Beresford said he had to speak to Mr. Moss about

some sheep; but his brother, he added, would be glad to accompany us to see the country.

"Well, then," said I, "you can stay with your mother, Betsy, and we will go on with our search."

"I should like to go with you," said Betsy; "the day is so fine, and I am so fond of seeing stone-quarries."

"Fond of seeing stone-quarries!" thought I; "what has come to the hussy; she never was so interested about stone-quarries before. Come, then," I said, "and don't complain of being tired, for we shall make a long walk of it, perhaps."

We re-crossed the river and struck into the bush, William going on before, and I and Crab following sedately behind, while Betsy and the stranger came after us. We soon came on some stone-quarries, but we saw none that pleased us. There were so many, that we were fastidious about them.

"I know of a capital lot of stone just on the other side of that little green hill," said Crab, "if it would not be too far for carting: but it all lies on the surface, so the distance of cartage would be saved by the ease of getting at the stone."

"It can do no harm for us to see it," said I, "so let us push on. Betsy! where the deuce is the girl? Don't loiter behind so, or you'll be lost in the bush, and your new acquaintance would not be able to help you in such a strait, I think, eh?"

"Oh, no fear, papa, of being lost in the bush, close at home. I have more fear of the wild cattle that the men are bringing in to-day."

"Wild cattle!" said George Beresford; "are the cattle then so wild here! are they savage when molested!"

"Savage!" said Crab, "there's nothing savage about the poor things; but they are angry at times, and so would you be if you had half a dozen men on horseback riding after you for some hours, and cracking their whips at you enough to deafen a gum-tree! They are wildish a bit now and then, and when there's a mob of them rampaging along they can't stand on ceremony. You must get out of their way, that's all. A little more to the left, master, if you please; no need to go over a hill when you can go round it. There's no end to hills in this country!"

We walked on till we had gone about two miles from home, when we came upon a splendid lot of stones, of all shapes and sizes, and Crab, in his zeal, began to use his crowbar to heave up a slab here and there, to see what was under it. Our new acquaintance, to manifest his desire to render assistance in our search, took the crowbar, and worked away with



great vigour in an irregular pit of stones, which looked of an inviting quality. He had not proceeded far in his task before he uttered a sharp cry, and began to dance about.

"What's the matter?" said William; "has the crowbar fallen on your toe?"

"Toe! it's not my toe! I've been bit by a snake!"

"A snake! It's strange that we did not observe it! But I see, it's no snake; it's the red ants that you have disturbed, and one has given you a nip. I'll soon bring some more of them out."

So saying, he took the crowbar, and, peering about, struck it lightly at the entrance of the passage several times. Immediately a swarm of these prodigious ants sailed out, elevating their nippers, and showing signs of anger and irritation. These red ants are about an inch and a half long, very bold and fierce in their nature, and they do not hesitate to attack any intruder on their domains. About four years before this time, one of my men, who was employed in raising stone about half a mile from the house, was obliged to abandon the quarry from the numbers and determined hostility of these courageous and daring creatures.

We, who knew what was coming, got out of the way, but our friend, with the curiosity of a new-comer, waited in the pit, to examine the appearance and motions of this curious army of ants. He did not stay there long, however, for the angry ants attacked him in a moment, and, biting his shins, and crawling under his clothes, set him a-dancing in a manner that did infinite credit to his agility. The pleasure of this novel sensation was not increased by the loud laughter which accompanied his capers from all—all excepting my daughter Betsy, whose usual love of mirth had become subdued from politeness and in courtesy to a stranger.

"For Heaven's sake, William," she called out, "do help Mr. Beresford; those horrid ants will bite him to death."

"I'll fire at them," said William, "if he will only stand still and let me pick 'em off one by one. But, never mind, they only bite, and they are not venomous—at least much—and I never knew any harm come from their bites. Our Bob has been bitten by them all over, and he's used to them now, he says; and, upon my word, I think the ants learned to know him, for they left off attacking him after a bit."

"This will do, Crab," said I; "this is capital stone, and plenty of it, and it's all down hill, or nearly so, to the new house. So here we will fix for our quarry. And now we will go home."

"Not home yet, papa; Mr. Beresford wants to see the falls of the Clyde."

"Well, do you and William go with him, and show him the falls; but they are little worth seeing in June; the spring-time, in September or October, is the time for the falls, after the rains; then they are a sight worth seeing."

Leaving the young party to continue their walk, I and Crab turned our steps homewards, as I expected a herd of wild cattle to be driven into the stock-yard during the day. When we got home, I found that my wife had returned. She blamed me for letting Betsy go so far from home, in these troublous times, as she called them; but I told her there was no fear of bushrangers or natives in the daytime so near a settlement, and we followed such occupations as demanded our attention. When the time had elapsed, however, for Betsy's return home, my wife began to be uneasy at her absence, and urged me to go in search of her.

"She is gone into some friend's house on the way," said I; "there's no cause for being uneasy. William is with her, and the falls are not a quarter of a mile from a settler's house."

But all I could say could not calm my wife's uneasiness, for her late troubles had made her timid and nervous, till I began to be uneasy myself. I took my double-barrelled fowling-piece, and bidding two of my men, whom I could trust, to come with me, I set out in the direction of the falls.

I had not proceeded a hundred yards before I thought I heard the distant lowing of cattle, and presently after the cracking of the hunters' whips apprised me that the herd which I had been expecting all day were approaching the stock-yard.

Judging that an additional rider would be of use in forcing them into the yard, I returned to the hut, near which temporary stables had been erected, and putting a saddle on the horse that was there—the two others were out after the cattle—I was soon in the midst of the sport.

The forcing the cattle into the stock-yard is the most difficult part of the task, as they are apt to break away when they scent the enclosure, and to divide in separate mobs, which it is exceedingly difficult to get together again, as they fly off in all directions, and become savage and furious as they are hard pressed by the shouts and whips of the huntsmen.

In collecting them from their various runs, it is the practice for three to five or six horsemen to set out together at the



earliest break of day. The horsemen are provided with a roughly-made whip, with a leather thong, and a peculiar sort of lash at the end of it, made from an old silk handkerchief, which is the best material for producing a loud crack.

To make this lash, two strips of an old silk handkerchief, about six inches long, are wetted, and twisted tight separately, and then twisted tightly together. It is surprising to those who have never tried this peculiar lash to hear the astonishing loud crack that it will make. It is the noise of these cracking stop-whips that frightens the cattle into the required direction; and without these whips it would be useless to attempt to drive them.

Thus provided, the hunters proceed to the spots where they divine that cattle have rested the preceding night, observing especially the brows of hills sheltered from the wind. When they see a mob of cattle, a dozen, more or less, they note the spot, and pass on, taking care not to disturb them, and continue their search after more.

In this way they proceed, spreading themselves over the country, and going twenty miles, perhaps, from home, noting the different little mobs here and there on their passage. They then gently urge the mob furthest off towards the mob nearer home, and then urge the mob so joined to the next one, and so on.

After a little while, the cattle begin to suspect mischief, and then the furious riding begins, and the smaller the number, the more difficult it is to drive them. A horseman takes each flank of the mob, and the rest of the hunters take charge of the cattle from behind. Every now and then the cattle break off to the right or left, and then the horseman, with loud shouts, pursues them, and with the cracking of his whip drives them back to the main body. Sometimes the whole body of cattle will make a rush to escape, and then the utmost efforts of the hunters are necessary to prevent them from dispersing.

The country being in a state of nature, and for the most part covered with dead timber, the sort of riding may be imagined. Copses are dashed through, dead trunks of trees are continually to be leaped, for the herd must be followed and kept in the right direction at all hazards to man and horse; and whatever the country, it must be taken, up hill or down hill, up precipice or down precipice.

Sometimes the cattle take a direction round the brow of a steep mountain, with a wall of turf on your left hand, and a precipice of a hundred feet or two on your right! No matter; on you must go, hooting, shouting, and cracking the

never-resting whip, and never thinking of the danger till you have passed it.

Talk of fox-hunting! It is nothing compared with wild cattle-hunting! and as to the excitement, cattle-hunting is ten times more exciting, but, it must be added, incomparably more dangerous! Besides, in cattle-hunting you see your game, and a multitude of wild cattle in a state of fury from hard driving is a grand and imposing spectacle; I say nothing of the additional enlivenment of becoming the pursued instead of the pursuer, from some devil of a bull taking it into his head to resent the affront put upon his independence. Then the chase assumes a very different complexion, and cool must be the man and steady must be the rider to escape when the wild bull is determined and inclined to be vicious.

I remember one of my men was chased between the Shannon and the Clyde for ten miles on end by a furious bullock, who kept his horse at the stretch of his speed the whole way, till the rider came to a deep part of the Clyde, when he dashed in, glad to escape from his tormentor any way. When a pretty good number are collected in this way, they are more easily driven, as they are in each other's way, and impede each other's motions; but they are the more dangerous when they make a rush at you. The only thing to be done then is to ride with all your speed to the right or left, and keep up with them in a parallel line till their speed is spent; then the work has to be done again.

On the present occasion, my men had collected a mob of above a hundred, some of which belonged to other parties, and as it was winter-time, and the cattle were not exhausted by the heat, as they sometimes are in summer—for I have known a fat bullock to lie down when thus driven from exhaustion, and I have not been able to make him get up even by whipping him—they were in fine condition for a run, and I soon saw that there would be more than ordinary difficulty in getting them into the stock-yard, which was less than a quarter of a mile from the building where I was residing.

We were five horsemen in all; three of my own horses, and two of my neighbours, who from love of the sport, had joined in the hunt. We had just got them to the entrance of the yard, where they stood hesitating and obstinate, when a fine young bull uttered a savage cry and, darting between me and another rider, galloped into the plain followed by the whole herd.

It was quite a narrow escape for both of us, and we were only just in time in avoiding the rush of the infuriated animals. But we were too well used to the work to be baffled,



and in a short time we had them all under command, though it required all the shouting and whip-cracking that we could raise to urge them to the entrance again. As it was, I think we should have lost them, had it not been for two cows belonging to our tame herd, which, fortunately, this time, were in front, and they being used to the yard, cantered in to avoid the pressure from behind, and then another simultaneous shout on our part and a renewed cracking of whips forced them all in; then up bars, and we had them safe.

The young bull, however, did not approve of the trick, and he bellowed and galloped about the yard in a state of perfect fury, lashing his tail about, and plunging his horns into the ground until he got quite mad. In his anger he made a dash at the heavy logs of which the yard was built, and butting his head against them, he made the whole stockade vibrate with the concussion. Finding it too strong to break through, he bellowed and plunged about with increased rage, when suddenly he made a run at the logs, and with one desperate bound he leaped right over them, although they were nearly eight feet high, and dashed into the bush.

I admired the vigour and determination of the animal, and as we did not want him, I let him go his way, when it suddenly struck me that the course which he had taken was the same which my daughter would be pursuing on her way home. I communicated my fears to my two men, who were standing by me, and, instantly seeing the danger, they mounted their horses without delay, and we proceeded after the furious animal, intending to head him, so as to turn him away from the path where he might do mischief.

The short time that elapsed between his escape and my thought of its danger was sufficient to enable him to get considerably ahead of us. I took the way to the right, being best mounted; and my horse being fresh, I put him to the top of his speed, riding over everything in my way in my terrible anxiety.

A couple of miles were passed in almost less time than I have taken to relate it, when my worst fears were realised! I beheld the infuriated animal, rendered more furious by our pursuit and our cries, with its horns near the ground, in the act of rushing towards my daughter Betsy, who, with my son and the young stranger, seemed for the moment stupefied with horror at the suddenness and the imminence of the danger.

The red ribands of the unfortunate bonnet about which poor Betsy had been so facetious a few days before, as being

honoured with a cart and four bullocks for its special conveyance from Hobart Town, were streaming in the wind, and whether or not that colour is really hateful to cattle I do not know, but in the present instance the raging bull seemed to me to disregard her two companions, and with an appalling bellowing that made the woods re-echo, and filled me with a heartrending fear, which I cannot describe in words, it rushed to the spot where my poor girl, in an agony of terror, with eyes fixed and hands uplifted, had fallen on her knees before him.

The furious brute rushed on, and I had already given up my dear child for lost, when I saw the young stranger with a bound leap forward between them ;—instantly falling on one knee, and taking a rapid but cool aim, he fired ! The ball with which his musket was loaded struck the animal between its horns, and the huge bull suddenly tumbled over and over on the grass, striking down in its plunging course our heroic preserver, and, as I afterwards found, breaking his musket to pieces.

Almost at the same moment I reached the spot, and at the report of the musket, and the fall of the bull, my well-trained and intelligent horse immediately checked himself, and stood snorting with inquiring ears. For some seconds no one stirred ; the bull lay on the ground dead ; my daughter knelt with her hands clasped, still in the attitude of fear, and George Beresford remained motionless by her side.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE GIPSY BUSHRANGER.

THE two horsemen who had accompanied me from the stock-yard now dismounted, and their advance broke the spell of fear and doubt which for a moment entranced my faculties. I threw myself from my horse, and clasped my daughter in my arms. Grasping my hand convulsively, she rose from her knees, and turned to the spot where her young friend was lying insensible and pale. Betsy did not speak, but kneeling down by the body, clasped her hands, and looked up to us appealingly.

"Ride hard to the surgeon's ; it's not half a mile off," said William to one of the men. "Give him your horse to come back on."

In less than five minutes the surgeon was with us. The young man still remained insensible.



"We must bleed him instantly," said the surgeon. "Raise him up. Hold his arm out—so. Cut open the sleeve of his coat; no time for ceremony. There, that will do; he is all right: you'll see he will come to presently. I hope there are no bones broken."

"Good heavens!" said Betsy, "he will bleed to death."

"No fear of that; do him good; very good blood; body in good state—so it ought to be at his age. There he is—coming to—beautifully. Now we'll bind his arm up. Who has got something to bind it with? Ah! this red riband will do very well. But you'll spoil your smart bonnet. That's it—and I declare here's young Thornley has got a pannikin of water for him. You're a thoughtful lad, and no doubt this young fellow will do as much for you another time."

"Thank ye," said Will; "I hope I shall not have to trouble him. I wish he had let me shoot the bull, though; but Betsy was right before me, and I was afraid of hitting her if I fired."

"You needn't be sorry that you didn't kill the bull, Master William," said one of the men; "there's Mr. Crab will be in a terrible taking about it; it was his favourite one of the herd, and a nice, tight, clean-made cretur he was, poor fellow."

"That's right, Mr. — what's his name?" said the surgeon.

"Mr. George Beresford," said Betsy; "he is Mr. Beresford's brother."

"Oh! the brother that's going to be married to Lucy Moss;—well, then, Mr. Beresford, how do you find yourself? Pain anywhere?"

"I feel a little faint—where's the bull?"

"There he is; but I hope he is not only stunned too; perhaps he'll start up and give us a poke. Let us examine him a bit. He's quite dead. Struck between the horns! a lucky shot, by George! You have had a narrow escape, some of you."

"A capital shot, sir; but Mr. Crab will not like it. I really don't know what he will do—this bull was such a pet of his. He saved it, between four and five years ago, from being killed—like. I know I shouldn't like to be the one to tell him of it."

"Rather an odd animal to make a pet of; but every one to his taste. Now, my young friend, I recommend you to go home, and go to bed, and lie still for a day or so. There are no bones broken, but you may have received more injury than appears at first, and the best way is to guard against it,

to avoid fever and so forth. But what's the matter with the young lady, eh? Oh! fright; well, it is allowable for young ladies to be frightened. Let me feel your pulse. There, shake hands with the gentleman—'your preserver,' as you call him. Proper to be grateful: very right feeling;—pulse not quite right, though! Odd sort of fluttering! There—that will do, young gentleman—you needn't be shaking hands all day! Get home and keep quiet."

So saying, our excellent and kind-hearted surgeon took his leave, and I with Betsy and William returned home. On my arrival there I found a letter for me which had been sent express from Hobart Town, requiring my presence as a witness on the approaching trial of the bushrangers who had been captured in our late expedition. As the matter admitted of no delay, I immediately prepared for my departure, intending to ride about eighteen miles before night, and sleep on the road. Giving such directions as were necessary in my absence, I slung my fowling-piece over my shoulder, and set off on my journey. I slept that night at the Green Ponds, and met with nothing remarkable. I got into town about four o'clock next day, and ascertained that the trial of the bushrangers was to take place in a few days. But I set off home without waiting for the trial, on finding evidence enough without me, and glad to get rid of the business.

I had some money matters to arrange with a settler of New Norfolk, so I took that road, intending to cut across the country to the Clyde. I stopped at New Norfolk that night, and proceeded on my journey early the next morning. There was nothing to prevent my reaching home before night, though the country was hilly, as my horse was in good condition. I had no fear of bushrangers or natives, for all the bushrangers excepting two had been taken; and of natives I never had any fear when armed and on horseback.

I met with nothing worth noting till I got within about eight miles from home, when I saw a lot of sheep with my brand on them, which I knew at once were part of my home flock of merinoes. Impelled by that sort of acquired instinct which prompts a settler, I think, to go after his lost stock wherever he comes across them, I followed the sheep, which led me a pretty dance over the hills.

There were not above twenty of them, but they scudded away like deer; for lost sheep soon became wild in Van Diemen's Land, and it surprises those who have not had experience of their habits, to find how fast and how long they can run; it is quite a chase. Without a dog and alone, I had no chance with them. My hunt after these sheep,



however, had drawn me near one of the steep hills overlooking the Clyde; and as my horse was rather fagged with the run over the hilly country of that district, I thought I would give him a little rest and a drink; so, dismounting, I led him by a circuitous path down to the water, where there was a small patch of rich grass, and tethered him there. I then re-ascended the hill to look about me, for it seemed to me that I had fallen on a little nook where there was good feed for five or six hundred sheep, or perhaps more, which no one had taken possession of.

I was scanning the place with a wistful eye, and had advanced to the edge of a precipice overlooking the river, and about a hundred feet above it, the better to take in the prospect, when I observed a man emerging from a thicket of bushes, at some little distance, with a gun in his hand. He had the appearance of a stock-keeper, and not thinking of bushrangers at the moment, I supposed him to be some one who had been beforehand with me in bespeaking a good run.

I felt a little disappointed at the sight, for I had already in my mind established a stock-hut near the spot, and was calculating how many sheep it would feed, while the supposed stock-keeper continued his advance towards me. My fowling-piece was lying on the grass, as I had taken it off to easy myself while I was taking a survey of the country; but in truth I was not thinking of the necessity of using it, being near the Clyde, and having no thought of the bushrangers.

In the meantime, the man approached me nearer and nearer, and an odd manner which he seemed to have of holding his musket excited my suspicions. I observed him more attentively, and to my exceeding surprise, and I must add consternation, I recognised the features of the Gipsy leader of the late gang of bushrangers. I had only time to snatch my fowling-piece from the grass, when, pointing his musket at me, at a distance of about fifty yards, he called out to me to lay down my arms! My gun was already pointed at him, and my only notice of his command was to cock it, and place my finger on the trigger, ready to fire.

We remained in this position for nearly a minute, till I felt my arms ache with holding out my gun in the attitude of taking aim; I lowered it, with the muzzle, however, still pointed at the bushranger, and with my finger on the trigger. At this movement, I observed he hesitated a little; and then lowered his gun as I had done.

I was at a loss what to do at this extraordinary adventure

I did not like to be the first to fire, for he might have companions at hand; and I guessed he was unwilling to run the risk of firing at me, for if he missed he would be at my mercy.

As I anxiously examined my antagonist, it seemed to me that he had a wearied and subdued appearance. So far as his rough garments and his grisly beard went, he looked ferocious enough; but there was something in his eye which conveyed to me the feeling that he had no mind to make a fight of it if he could avoid it. Impressed with this idea, I threw my gun over my arm, and motioned him to do the same.

"Who are you?" said I, "and what do you want?"

"Who are you?"

"One who does not wish to do you any harm, even if you are what I suspect you to be."

"And what do you suspect me to be?"

"You look as if you had taken to the bush; but I don't want to meddle with you, if you don't meddle with me."

At these words, he advanced towards me—within a dozen yards or so.

"I see," he said, "you are not one of the soldiers—I think I can trust you."

"Don't come any nearer," said I; "you must excuse me, but the times are dangerous. You may trust me, but you can't expect me to trust you."

"True," he said.

He looked round, and hesitated for a few moments, and then gazed at me earnestly.

"You are one of the old settlers?"

"I am; and my farm is on the banks of this river, about a dozen miles up. My name is William Thornley, and now you know all about me that is necessary for you to know. Who are you?"

I knew who he was well enough, but I did not think it prudent to let him know that I recognised him; so I let things take their course.

"Who am I!" said the bushranger. "Ah! that is not easy to say. But, however, I will show you that I can trust you. You will give me your word that you will take no advantage of me? Not that I fear it——"

"Oh! I will give you my word not to attempt anything against you—but what is your object? What do you want with me?"

He made no reply, but laid his gun gently on the grass,



and then passed round me, and sat down at a few yards distance, so that I was between him and his weapon.

"Well, Mr. Thornley," said he, "will that do. You see I am now unarmed. I don't ask you to do the same, because I cannot expect you to trust me; but the truth is, I want to have a little talk with you. I have something on my mind which weighs heavy on me, and whom to speak to I do not know. I know your character, and that you have never been hard on your Government men, as some are. At any rate speak to some one I must! Are you inclined to listen to me?"

I was exceedingly moved at this unexpected appeal to me at such a time and in such a place. There was no sound and no object save ourselves to disturb the vast solitude of the wilderness. Below us flowed the Clyde, beneath an abrupt precipice; around were undulating hills, almost bare of trees; in the distance towered the snowy mountain which formed the boundary to the landscape. I looked at my companion doubtfully; for I had heard so many stories of the treachery of the bushrangers, that I feared for a moment that this acting might only be a trick to throw me off my guard. Besides, this was the very man whom I knew to have been at the head of the party of bushrangers who had been captured at the Great Lake.

He observed the doubt and hesitation which were expressed in my looks, and pointed to his gun, which was on the other side of me:

"What more can I do," said he, "to convince you that I meditate neither violence nor treachery against you? Indeed, when you know my purpose, you will see that they would defeat my own object."

"What is your purpose, then? Tell me at once—are you one of the late party of bushrangers who have done such mischief in the island?"

"I am; and more than that, I am—or rather was—their leader. I planned the escape from Macquarie Harbour; and it was I who kept them together, and made them understand their strength, and how to use it. But that's nothing now. I do not want to talk to you about that. But I tell you who and what I am, that you may see I have no disguise with you; because I have a great favour—a very great favour—to ask of you; and if I can obtain it from you on no other terms, I am almost inclined to say, take me to Camp as your prisoner, and let the capture of the Gipsy—ah! I see you know that name, and the terror it has given, and still gives, to the merciless wretches who pursue me—I say, let the

capture of the Gipsy, and his death, if you will—for it must come to that at last—be the price of the favour that I have to beg of you!”

“Speak on, my man,” I said; “you have done some ill deeds, but this is not the time to taunt you with them. What do you want of me? and if it is anything that an honest man can do, I promise you beforehand that I will do it.”

“You will?—but you do not know it yet. Now listen to me.

“Perhaps you do not know that I have been in the colony for ten years. I was a lifer. It’s bad that; better hang a man at once than punish him for life; there ought to be a prospect of an end to suffering; then the man can look forward to something; he would have hope left. But never mind that; I only speak of it because I believe it was the feeling of despair that first led me wrong, and drove me from bad to worse. Shortly after my landing, I was assigned to a very good master. There were not many settlers then, and we did not know so much of the country as we do now. As I was handy in many things, and able to earn money, I soon got my liberty on the old condition—that is, of paying so much a week to my master. The trick is not played now, but it was then, and by some of the big ones too. However, all I cared for was my liberty, and I was glad enough to get that for seven shillings a week. But still I was a Government prisoner, and that galled me, for I knew I was liable to lose my license at the caprice of my master, and to be called into Government employ. Besides, I got acquainted with a young woman and married her, and then I felt the bitterness of slavery worse than ever, for I was attached to her sincerely, and I could not contemplate the chance of parting from her without pain. So about three years after I had been in this way, I made an attempt to escape with her in a vessel that was sailing for England. It was a mad scheme I know, but what will not a man risk for his liberty?”

“What led you to think of going back to England? What were you sent out for?”

“Why, now, sir, if I tell you, you will not believe me, perhaps, for there is not a prisoner that is asked the question who will not say that he was innocent; and, indeed, I don’t think it is a fair question to ask them, for how can you expect a man to condemn himself?”

“I should not have asked you if you had not begun to tell me your story; but if you don’t like to tell me, say nothing.”



"I have no reason to care for telling the truth. I was one of a gang of poachers in Herefordshire, and on a certain night we were surprised by the keepers, and somehow, I don't know how, we came to blows, and the long and the short of it is, one of the keepers was killed, and there's the truth of it."

"And you were tried for the murder?"

"I and two others were; and one was hanged, and I and my mate were transported for life."

"Well, the less that's said about that the better; now go on with your story, but let me know what it is you would have me do for you."

"I'll come to that presently; but I must tell you something about my story, or you will not understand me. I was discovered in the vessel, concealed among the casks, by the searching party and brought on shore with my wife, and you know, I suppose, that the punishment is death. But Colonel Davey—he was Governor then—let me off; but I was condemned to work in chains in Government employ. This was a horrid life, and I determined not to stand it. There were one or two others in the chain-gang all ready for a start into the bush, if they had anyone to plan for them. I was always a good one at head-work, and it was not long before I contrived one night to get rid of our fetters. There were three others beside myself. We got on the top of the wall very cleverly, and first one dropped down (it was as dark as pitch, and we could not see what became of him); then another dropped, and then the third. Not a word was spoken. I was the last, and glad enough was I when I felt myself sliding down the rope outside the yard. But I had to grin on the other side of my mouth when I came to the bottom. One of the sneaks whom I had trusted had betrayed us, and I found myself in the arms of two constables, who grasped me tightly. I gave one of them a sickener, and could have easily managed the other, but he gave the alarm, and then lots of others sprang up, and lights and soldiers appeared. I was overpowered by so many. They bound my arms, and then I was tried for the attempt to escape and the assault on the constable, and condemned to Macquerie Harbour for life."

"I don't want to stop you in your story," said I; "but what has all this to do with the service that you want of me? The sun is going down behind that hill, and——"

"Wait a bit—wait a bit—you will see. I have not told you that my wife brought me a child. It is now seven years old. I loved that child, Mr. Thornley, more than a parent usually loves its child. It was all in all to me. It was the

only bright thing that I had to look upon. When I was sentenced to Macquarie Harbour for life, it would have been a mercy to put me to death. I should have put myself to death if it had not been for the thought of that little girl. Well, sir, I will not say more about that. When a man takes to the bush, and has done what I have done, he is thought to be a monster without feeling or affection. But people don't understand us. There is no man, sir, depend upon it, so bad that he has not some good in him; and I have had some experience, for I have seen the worst of us—the very worst—in the most miserable of all conditions, for that Macquarie Harbour is a real hell upon earth! There is no time to tell you about the hardships and the miseries which the prisoners suffer in that horrible place—it soon kills them. But my greatest misery was being deprived of my little girl—my plaything—my darling—my life! I had not been at Macquarie Harbour a month before news came that my wife was dead. I'll tell you the truth, sir, attached to her as I was, I was rather glad than sorry for it. I could not bear the thought of her falling into anybody else's hands, and as our separation was now absolutely and hopelessly for ever—it is the truth—I was rather glad than sorry when I heard of her death. But my poor little child! I thought of her night and day, wondering and thinking what would become of her! I could think of nothing else; at last my thoughts began to turn to the possibility of escaping from Macquarie Harbour, desperate as the attempt appeared; for, to cross the bush without arms and without provisions, exposed to the attacks of the natives, seemed all but an impossibility. But almost anything may be done, by resolution and patience, and watching your opportunity. I have learned to know that secret."

I now became interested in the Gipsy's story, judging that some useful information might be got from it, and I rather eagerly asked him: "And how did you escape? how did you do it?"

"Ah! that's a trick worth knowing! but I want you to befriend me, and so I'll tell you all about it."

"How many were there who escaped with you?"

"We were fourteen in all. You know, perhaps, that the labour at Macquarie Harbour is dreadfully severe, and the privations very great; and if the prisoners were not kept down by a most vigilant system of superintendence, there would be mutinies every day. But each prisoner is so watched and guarded, that, working in chains, which are constantly examined, escape is almost impossible; and even



if escape were possible, wandering in the bush without arms or provisions is hardly less dreadful. However, we did not think so; we were resolved to escape, at all risks, and take our chance of the rest. It was a very difficult matter to communicate together, so as to agree on the plan of escape, and having been deceived once before, I was wary of trusting my secret intention to escape to any suspicious person. You must know that the different gangs that work in chains are watched by overseers, who have their eyes constantly on them, and guarded by sentinels with loaded muskets. It must happen, however, that at some times particular gangs are set to work at a little distance from the rest, on the outside of the general work. It was for one of these occasions that I waited. There were fourteen of us in all, and we went on working—cutting down timber and dragging it to the saw-pits, the usual work there—giving no cause for suspicion, till dusk, when we managed so that we proceeded homeward in a straggling line. There were two sentinels on the line, whom we had to pass, and there were two overseers who followed after us. At a given signal one of our confederates rushed on the sentinel farthest off, while, at the same time, I clasped the sentinel near me round the waist and arms. This prevented them from firing off their muskets, and giving the alarm. While that was doing, another party of us gagged and bound the two overseers. Thus we had them all in our power, and it was but the work of a moment, though it takes longer to tell. The muskets were wrenched from the soldiers, and these, with their cartouche boxes, in each of which we found twenty rounds of ball-cartridge, furnished us with arms. We bound and gagged the soldiers as we had done the overseers, so you see that we accomplished our purpose without taking life; not that we should have hesitated to sacrifice them all, had it been necessary, but it was not, and it's always bad policy, to my mind, to take away life uselessly; it's only wantonness and cruelty to do so, and it prejudices a man on his trial. The next thing to be done was to get rid of our chains, for there was no time to be lost, as we knew that if we were not present at muster, the officer would send to look after us. We scrambled away as well as we could, till we got a little distance off, and out of hearing, and then we set to with a will, and rid ourselves of our fetters, all except three, and those were too tightly fitted to be got off on a sudden without better tools. We got the three chained men along with us, however, as well as we could, for we would not leave them; so we helped them on by turns, and the next day, when we were more easy, we contrived to rid them of their encum-

brances. We hastened on all night. I ought to tell you that we heard the bell rung, and the alarm given, but we had gained an hour good, and the ungagging of the sentinels and the overseers, and hearing their story, took up some time, no doubt. Besides, it is not easy to hit on a track in the dusk, and as there were fourteen of us armed with two muskets, our pursuers would not proceed so briskly as they otherwise might, and would not scatter themselves to look after us. We were without provisions, but we did not care about that, and not being used to long walks, we were soon knocked up. But the desire of liberty kept us up, and we struck right across the country in as straight a line as we could guess. The second day we were all very sick and faint, and the night before was very cold, and we were cramped and unfit to travel. The second night we all crept into a cave, which was sandy inside, where we lay pretty warm, but we were ravenously hungry. We might have shot more than one kangaroo that day, but it was agreed that we should not fire, lest the report of our gun should betray our resting-place to our pursuers. As we lay huddled together, we heard the opossums squealing in the trees about, and two of us, who were least tired, tried to get some of them. When we climbed up the trees, they sprang away like squirrels, and we had no chance with them that way; besides, it was dark, and we could distinguish them only faintly and obscurely. We did contrive, however, to kill five by pelting them on a long overhanging bough, but they remained suspended by their tails, and did not drop, although dead. To hungry men a dead opossum is something, so one of us contrived to climb to them, and get them down; and then we lighted a fire in the cave, quite at the extremity inside, to prevent the flame from being seen, and roasted them as the natives do. They were horrid rank things to eat, and almost made us sick, hungry as we were; but I don't think a hair of them was left among us. The next day we shot a kangaroo, but we feared to light a fire because of the smoke, so we ate it raw. Well, Mr. Thornley, I will not take up your time by telling you every little thing that we did in the bush. We came at last to the outskirts of New Norfolk, and we debated what we should do. Some were for attacking the settlement, and getting arms; but I persuaded them that it would be better for us to endeavour to seize some small vessel, and escape altogether from the colony; and in the meantime to keep ourselves close, and not give any alarm. My companions agreed to this, and we struck across the country to Brighton Plains, and so to Pitt Water, where we expected to find some



large boats, or, perhaps, some small vessel, by means of which we might get away."

"And how was it that you did not follow that plan?"

"We did follow it; we got to Pitt Water, and lay snug there for a while; but we were obliged to rob a settler's house of provisions for food, and that first gave the alarm. We made a dash at a boat, but it was too late; precautions had been taken, and the soldiers were out after us. We were then obliged to retreat from Pitt Water, intending to get into the neighbourhood of the lakes, and go farther westward, if necessary, and retreat to the coast, where we judged we should be too far off to be molested."

"You did a great deal of mischief at Pitt Water before you left it, if all the stories are true?"

"We did, Mr. Thornley, I own it; but my men were determined to have arms, and the settlers of course resisted, and some of my men got wounded, and that made them savage."

"And afterwards you attacked poor Moss's cottage?"

"My men had been told that he had a large sum in dollars at his hut;—I am surprised that settlers can be so foolish as to take valuables into the bush—that was all they wanted."

"But why did you take poor Moss along with you?"

"I was obliged to do it to save his life; some of my men would have knocked him on the head if I had not prevented them. It's true, Mr. Thornley, it is indeed; I saved his life."

"Well—that's something in your favour. And now as the sun is sinking fast, and as the dusk will come on us presently, tell me at once what you would have me do for you."

"Mr. Thornley," said the bushranger, "I have told you of my little girl. I have seen her since the dispersion of my party at the Great Lake. You know that I and another escaped. Since then, I have ventured, in disguise, into Hobart Town itself, and have there seen my child. The sight of her, and her embraces, have produced in me a strange feeling. I would willingly sacrifice my life to do her good; and I cannot conceal from myself that the chances are that I must be taken at last; and that if I do not perish miserably in the bush, I shall be betrayed, and shot, or hanged."

"And what can I do to prevent it?"

"You can do nothing to prevent that end, for I know that I am too deep in for it to be pardoned; if I were to give myself up, the Government would be obliged to hang me for

example's sake. No, no; I know my own condition, and I foresee my own fate. It is not of myself that I am thinking, but of my child. Mr. Thornley, will you do this for me; will you do an act of kindness and charity to a wretched man, who has only one thing to care for in this world? I know it is much to ask, and that I should not be disappointed if you refuse it. Will you keep your eye on my poor child, and, so far as you can, protect it? I cannot ask you to provide for it; but be its protector, and let her little innocent heart know that there is some one in the wide world to whom she may look up for advice—for assistance, perhaps, in difficulty—at all events, for kindness and sympathy. That is my request; will you have so much compassion on the poor, blasted, and hunted bushranger as to promise to do for me this act of kindness?"

I gazed with astonishment, and I must add, not without visible concern, on the passionate appeal of this desperate man in behalf of his child. I saw he was in earnest; there is no mistaking a man under such circumstances. I rapidly contemplated all the inconveniences of such an awkward charge as a hanged bushranger's orphan. As these thoughts passed through my mind, I caught the eye of the father; there was an expression in it of such utter abandonment of everything but the fate of his little daughter, which seemed to depend on my answer, that I was fairly overcome, and could not refuse him. "I will look after her," I said, "but there must be no more blood on your hands; you must promise me that. She shall be cared for, and now that I have said it, that's enough. I never break my word."

"Enough!" said he, "and more than I expected! I thank you for this, Mr. Thornley, and I could thank you on my knees. But what is that? Look there! a man on horseback—and more on foot. I must be on my guard."

As he spoke, the horseman galloped swiftly towards us. The men on foot came on in a body, and I perceived they were a party of soldiers. The Gipsy regarded them earnestly for a moment, and then ran to his gun, but in his eagerness he tripped and fell. The horseman, who was one of the constables from Hobart Town, was too quick for him. Before he could recover himself and seize his gun, the horseman was upon him.

"Surrender, you desperate villain, or I'll blow your brains out!"

The Gipsy clutched the horse's bridle, which reared and plunged, throwing the constable from his seat. He was a powerful and active man, and catching hold of the Gipsy



in his descent, he grappled with him, and tried to pinion his arms. He failed in this, and a fearful struggle took place between them.

"Come on," cried the constable to the soldiers, "let us take him alive."

The soldiers came on at a run. In the meantime the constable had got the Gipsy down, and the soldiers were close at hand, when suddenly, and with a convulsive effort, the Gipsy got his arms round the body of his captor, and with desperate efforts rolled himself round and round with the constable interlaced in his arms to the edge of the precipice.

"For God's sake," cried the constable with a shriek of agony, "help—help—we shall be over!" But it was too late. The soldiers were in the act of grasping the wretched man's clothes, when the bushranger, with a last convulsive struggle, whirled the body of his antagonist over the dreadful precipice, himself accompanying him in his fall. We gazed over the edge, and beheld the bodies of the two clasped fast together, turning over and over in the air, till they came with a terrible shock to the ground, smashed and lifeless. As the precipice overhung the river, the bodies had not far to roll before they splashed into the water, and we saw them no more.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### UNDER ARREST.

FOR some time we stood gazing down the precipice in fearful silence.

"That was a desperate chap, that Gipsy!" said the corporal, who in right of his dignity thought it incumbent upon him to speak first; "who would have guessed that he would be up to that dodge?"

"It's a dodge that has done for him as well as the constable," said one of the soldiers.

"It's well it's no worse," rejoined the corporal. "It might have been one of us, if the constable had not been in such a d——d hurry to make the capture; and you see what he has got by his greediness. However, it's only a constable, so it's no great matter. But, pray, mister," he continued, turning to me, "who the devil are you? You were talking to the Gipsy when we first saw you, and you were as thick as two thieves. Steadman, take charge of him.

We must take you to Camp with us, sir; our orders are to secure the Gipsy and any companions that he may have with him."

"Here's another mess," thought I, "and I'm in another pickle with the soldiers; the deuce is in my luck!—My friends," said I, "I fell in with the Gipsy by accident. You see there's my horse grazing in the hollow below; I was on my way home when I fell in with the bushranger."

"That may be, sir, but it is rather suspicious; and I must obey orders. Bowman, go and fetch up the gentleman's horse."

"I suppose I may ride him?"

"No objection, sir, only we must have hold of the reins. Beg pardon, sir, you know we must do our duty, and obey orders; very sorry, sir, but it's always the custom to bind people's arms a little, just to keep them from doing mischief. Excuse me, sir, but you must not move away. Steadman, you are loaded?"

Steadman gave a sign of assent.

"Very pleasant," thought I; "however, they are not so bad as the old sergeant after all."

"You will have no objection to take me to the nearest magistrate?"

"Where is that?"

"At the Clyde, higher up about eleven or twelve miles."

"We are going that way, to report ourselves to the sergeant's party there."

"Then," said I, "let us make all the haste we can, for it's getting late. A two hours' brisk march will take us there."

"I think," said the corporal, "that we ought to be sure that the Gipsy really is dead, as well as the constable."

"Dead!" said Bowman, "he's dead enough I'll warrant; why, the falling through the air would kill a man from such a height, without the crash when he comes to the bottom."

"Ay, ay," said the corporal; "that's all very well; but one never knows what these bushrangers are up to. My orders are to take him, and we are to follow him wherever he goes, although I must say," and here the corporal looked over the precipice with a waggish air, "I shouldn't like to follow him down this height, eh, Steadman?"

"That would be going beyond our orders, as the major says; but if we are to look for the bodies, we had better make haste, before the stream carries them too far down."

We descended accordingly, by a circuitous path, and found that the ground where they had fallen was indented and



marked with blood. Following the course of the stream, we presently came to a spot where some dead timber obstructed the current, and there we saw the two bodies, separated and mangled and quite dead. The soldiers dragged them on shore, I remaining a passive spectator the while, and from the appearance of their remains there could be no doubt that the life of both was extinguished at the same moment that they fell to the earth from that fearful height. The corporal, with much formality, searched the pockets of the dead men, and, with a pencil, noted down their contents.

"Let's take the constable first," said the corporal. "What have we got here? a pair of handcuffs; ah, these come in handy; the bushranger won't want handcuffs any more, but they'll do for his mate."

"My good fellow," said I, "surely you are not going to put those handcuffs on me; I have told you who I am, and you will soon learn the truth of it."

"It may be all very right, sir, what you say; but the orders are to secure all the companions of the bushranger, and you can't deny that you were sitting cheek by jowl with him when we spied you out. But, wait a bit, Steadman; perhaps the gentleman don't like to put on the darbies because they are wet. What have we got next? It's all smashed; rum! it smells though; it's a pity now that the constable didn't give us a suck out of his rum flask before he toddled over. I can't bear waste."

"Don't you remember that parson chap told him at New Norfolk to mix water with his rum? He's mixed it now with a vengeance, eh? Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha! that's good. What's this? a pocket-book and a lot of papers, but they are all wet."

"Any mopuses?"

"Not a rap!—yes, there is, though—here's one, two, three, nine half-crown notes. Look in his other pockets, Steadman."

"My eyes! here's a find! a bundle of one-pound notes!"

"One-pound notes! where the devil did he prig them from. I wonder whose notes are they? Kemp and Co. —as good as dollars! What has he got in the other pockets?"

"A pair of small pistols; but one's broken from the fall, I suppose; three pieces of flint, a steel, a bit of punk;—capital stuff this to get a light;—a powder-horn, squeezed flat, a bag of balls, a capital clasp-knife; by George! here's a tidy tool to stick into a man! Something in a bag; it's tea! We shall come to a teapot next, I suppose. Here's

a jolly lump of tobacco, and a prime little wooden pipe! No more smoking for you, old boy;—and that's all I can find."

"Turn him over; something jingles, I'm sure. Feel inside there," said the corporal.

"He's in such a nasty condition—all smashed; stop, I'll slush him a bit with water. There, now let's see. By George! here's a gold watch, and chain and seals! And look here; sewed up in the breast of his coat there's something, but I'll have it out. Lend me his knife, and I'll rip it up. What's this? something curious, I suppose, by its being so carefully sewed up. There are papers inside, by the feel."

At this intimation, my thoughts recurred to the bush-ranger's child, and I judged that the parcel, which was so carefully enclosed in canvas and neatly sewed up, might contain something to throw a light on the previous life and history of the man, for I knew it was a common practice with offenders in England to be tried in feigned names to avoid being traced to their former connections.

"I should recommend you," said I, "not to meddle with that parcel, but to deliver it up to the proper authorities unopened. You may be called to account, perhaps, if anything should be lost or injured."

The corporal surveyed me with a doubtful air, as if he half suspected that I had some object in keeping secret the contents of the packet. Fortunately this made him more careful in preserving it intact, in order that its secrets might be discovered on a more fitting occasion.

"Give me the parcel," he said to Steadman; "we'll look at it another time. No need to let all the people know what's in it," giving a look at me; "and now what's to be done with the bodies? Our order is to bring in the body of the bush-ranger, dead or alive."

"Had you not better consult the magistrate?" said I; "I should think, as the body is sufficiently verified, the best thing to do is to bury it with the constable where they lie."

"Oh! you can verify the body, can you?" said the corporal. "Upon my word, Mr. Gentleman Bushranger, I think, that will go against you at the trial. However, it's not far to the magistrate's; so let us be moving, and get there with our prisoner as quick as we can; and if the magistrate thinks it right, we can come back again for the body."

We set out accordingly, I sitting on horseback in great state, with my arms tied behind me, and the horse led by the bridle by a soldier on each side. The corporal followed



behind, after slowly inserting, rather ostentatiously as it seemed to me, a ball cartridge into the muzzle of his firelock, and ramming it down leisurely. The click, click of the iron-ramrod on the ball, I took, as it was intended, as a quiet hint to me to be on my good behaviour.

In a little more than a couple of hours we reached the house of the magistrate, to whom I explained my adventure, and on his assurance the corporal released me, or rather handed me over to the custody of the civil power. All the papers and chattels which had been found on the persons of the deceased were placed in the safe-keeping of the magistrate; and I took care to point out particularly to his notice the curious packet discovered within the breast of the bushranger's coat. I then hastened home, but the news had already preceded me, that I was taken into custody by a party of soldiers for joining the bushrangers, and, as Crab immediately surmised, was to be summarily shot. I found my wife and family in the utmost consternation, but I soon assured them of my safety and good condition, by demanding instantly a supply of mutton-chops, which were speedily served up. When I had satisfied my first hunger, I related my adventure with the Gipsy bushranger. My wife shook her head when I came to the part about his little girl, and Crab, who was sitting sulkily in the corner, and had been out of humour, as I was privately informed, ever since the death of his pet bull, gave a horrible grin when I mentioned my promise.

"Upon my word," said he, "this is a nice country to live in, isn't it? If it can grow nothing else, it can grow bushrangers, however, and now honest people are engaged to look after the breed. It's lucky, though, master, that your friend the Gipsy did not give you a hug over the precipice. Upon my life, it's droll—very droll! Here you are, an old Surrey farmer, that one would think would have gone on in the regular jog-trot way all the days of your life, like other quiet folk, and if you haven't been engaging in more adventures than ever were told in a story-book! Dearee me—dearee me—the older one grows, the more one learns. If anything more was wanted to determine me to leave this wretched country, it's this last affair. And then to have a bushranger's child to keep! My goodness! What!—well, never mind—some people are! never mind what—and then there's nothing to be done, but another fool must be enticed into the country to shoot my poor bull—as if he ever did anybody any harm! He wasn't a bushranger, I suppose!"

"But he did do harm, Mr. Crab," said Betty, with some

vivacity ; " he bruised poor Mr. Beresford dreadfully, and he would have tossed me, if he had not been shot just in time ; and as it was, the dust from his horns, as he plunged them about the ground, flew into my eyes ! "

" Why didn't you run away then ? or you might have slipped aside, and caught hold of him by his tail, and then he couldn't have hurt you ; he couldn't have tossed you with his tail sure-ly ! "

" Good gracious, Mr. Crab, do you suppose that I can hold bulls by their tails ? A pretty sight, indeed, for your ugly bull to be rampaging about, and me holding on by his tail ! I wonder what next ! "

" Bless me ! " said Crab, " to hear how some people will go on ! But I'll go to bed. The quietest !—the gentlest—and the sweetest-tempered beast—when he was not provoked ! And why," he continued, frowning at poor Betsy, and resembling in his ill-humour the angry animal that he lamented,— " why, in the name of all that's reasonable, could the girl think of wearing red ribands in her bonnet up here in the bush, when a strip of kangaroo-skin or bullock's-hide would have served just as well ? And there's that young rascal that shot the bull ; yes, he marches about with the red ribands at his breast, as if he wanted to anger all the cattle in the district ! "

This last remark on the part of my old friend—unintentioned as was the hit—made Betsy blush in a manner that I thought was not caused by Crab's lamentation over his bull.

" Oh ! oh ! " thought I, " the young fellow has been making the best use of his time while I've been away. We must examine into this matter before it goes too far ; young ladies, I see, are precocious in Van Diemen's Land, I shall look out for the red ribands to-morrow."—And now to bed.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### CRAB'S LAMENTATIONS.

It was on a fine winter's morning in the month of July that I rose betimes to forward the building of my new stone house. The cold was so sharp that I was obliged to button myself up close and trot up and down by the side of my men, who were laying the foundation, to keep myself warm. In the little hollow near the rivulet running into the Clyde there was ice, and the hoar frost of the early morning had crisped



up the long tufted native grass, so that it crackled under the foot. The sun was bright and splendid, and the contrast of the winter's cold and frost with the dark green tints of the evergreen trees and shrubs struck me singularly, though I had witnessed it often enough before.

There was plenty of work to be done to repair the ravages of the fire, but I set about it with a good will, and I really doubt whether, on the whole, my losses grieved me very much, for the fire could not burn my land and sheep and cattle, and while those remained I knew there could be no want among us; besides, I was always fond of planning and contriving, and now I had everything to build anew. The exercise of walking briskly about made me cheerful, and I was in high good-humour when I was called in to breakfast.

Just as I reached the door of our temporary habitation, a bullock-cart, containing a lady and two children, with a female servant, drove up to the door in very good style, with one or two Government men, and an individual whom my practised eye at once detected as a new settler.

The cracking of a whip at some little distance, with the customary vociferations of the bullock-driver, apprised me that the baggage-cart of the party was in the rear, and I gave directions to my people to go forward and render them assistance.

Such a visitation coming unexpectedly on a farmer in Surrey would have filled him and his female establishment with no little dismay, but in Van Diemen's Land the stranger is always made welcome, and I could not help a feeling of exultation as I contemplated the difference of my position here and in England. A whole flock of sheep, more or less, was a matter of no consideration, and the fine, rough-looking home-made loaves, fermented by leaven—for there was no yeast to be had handy, and dampers had long since been discarded by us—were plentiful enough.

We welcomed the strangers with the usual cordiality. I saw they were way-worn and wanted encouragement, which was an additional reason for paying them attention. They had come that morning from the Cross March, on their way to the River Shannon, and had started before daylight, so anxious were they to get on their land. I easily persuaded them to stop a day or two with us, while their men were despatched to prepare the rude log-hut which usually forms the first habitation of the new settler.

We formed rather a large party at breakfast. I and my wife, with our family of six children and Crab, made nine, and the new party made four, so that we were thirteen in all.

I observed that Crab viewed the new-comers with a very grim expression of countenance, and from sundry contortions of his visage, which I had learned to interpret as indications on his part of commiseration and sympathy for the strangers, whom he was pleased to regard as fresh victims to be sacrificed, I guessed that he would take the opportunity to impress on them the horrible nature of their new country. Once or twice he essayed to commence an expostulatory and admonitory harangue, but Betsy, who was fond of teasing him, which I rather think was the reason why the old man liked her better than the others—by his rule of contrary, as Betsy used to say—watched him assiduously, and continually stopped his mouth by some fresh invitation to eat or drink.

"Mr. Crab, you'll surely take some of this kangaroo-tail soup; it was heated on purpose for you."

"No, my dear, enough's as good as a feast. You should always be moderate, Miss Betsy, in eating and drinking; waste makes want, Miss."

(Mr. Crab had grown sententious, but this I say in a parenthesis.)

"But you don't mean to say that you have done breakfast; you have eaten only six mutton chops; are you ill this morning?"

"I have had a few eggs besides, and I have picked some of that cold duck."

"Which cold duck? I don't see any left (this last remark was made '*sotto voce*,' as the magazines say); dear me, why, you'll never be able to exist this way!"

"I'm no great eater, my dear; I do think it's the chocolate that swells one out so! However, Mrs. Thornley, you can encourage this sort of drink astonishes me! The idea of having chocolate up here in the bush! To be sure one must drink something, and there's no beer to be had in this wretched place. Ah!" said he, heaving a deep sigh, and considerably relieving himself by its expiration, "I wish from my heart I was out of it, only I don't like to leave you all here alone in this wild country."

"Upon my word," said the stranger, whose name was Marsh, "there does not seem much to complain of in the way of eating and drinking in this country. Tea, coffee, chocolate, bread, toast, butter, eggs in heaps; I never saw, or rather did see, such a quantity of mutton chops!—cold ducks, cold saddle of mutton, tongue, and—kangaroo-tail soup—why, it's like a pot of glue!"

"You must take care how you venture on kangaroo-tail soup," said William; "it's a very dangerous dish."



"Dangerous! why?"

"Why, it's only the other day that a new settler——"

"Be quiet, William, and don't talk such nonsense," said his mother.

"He put a spoonful into his mouth incautiously——"

"And burned himself?" said Crab.

"No; it wasn't that—not being aware how strong it was, but liking it very much, he tried to smack his lips, but he found he couldn't open his mouth, it was so glued together, and it was not till after his lips had been moistened for a quarter of an hour with warm water that he could separate them to express his extreme satisfaction at the comforting nature of the potage! But who comes here! The surgeon, with Mr. Red Ribands, I declare."

My wife gave me a glance at this intimation, and I observed that the colour of the riband had suddenly become transferred to the cheeks of Miss Betsy. I gave a little nod in return, to show that I was wide awake, but I took no notice when the young lady complained of the closeness of the apartment (it was a cold winter's morning in July) and said she would go and look at the cows! By some extraordinary process, which is only known to the initiated, young Beresford disappeared from the room, I could not tell how or when. However, as I liked the young man, and saw no reason against the intimacy, I let things take their course, only putting to it that watchful and heedful attention which parents should always have in matters of this nature.

"And what's the matter with you, my friend?" said I to the surgeon. "What makes you look so melancholy this bright morning? No more bushrangers or natives, I hope?"

"No; they have not troubled me; I am concerned that I am obliged to leave my friends at the Clyde; but I must, or I shall soon be in difficulties; this is not a country for me to get a living in, I fear."

The strangers, with the natural anxiety of new-comers, caught at these words, and Mr. Marsh said:

"Indeed, sir, I am sorry to hear you say that. I am only just arrived in this country, and it's bad news to learn that a man cannot get his living in it."

Crab had already reached down his hat to return to his beloved plough; but at these words of complaint, so pleasing to his ear, he held it in his hand and lingered with one hand on the latch of the door.

"Yes, Mr. Thornley," said the surgeon, "I must leave you, that's certain, I have made up my mind to that; but whether I shall do better anywhere else is a question with me."

"Do better!" said Crab, with unrestrained satisfaction, "do better! Never! as long as you live in this country! Who did you ever know to do well in it? or who did you ever know that was in it that didn't long to get out of it? Haven't I been going day after day and year after year, only there was always something to be done for my friend here? There was always a bit of ground that wanted breaking up, and nobody could do it but me; or there was a bit of fencing to be done, or something to be built, or the sheep to be sheared, or the crop to be got in, or something or other to be done, so that I've never been able somehow to get away."

"Bless me," said Marsh to his wife, "these are sad tidings; we were given to understand that this was a thriving colony; how we have been deceived!"

"It may be thriving enough," said the surgeon, "for other people, but it is not thriving for me. I have been three years at the Clyde, and really, I may say, I have scarcely been able to earn a guinea"

"To be sure not!" said Crab, rubbing his hands with great glee, and setting his hat into the bowl of kangaroo-tail soup in his excitement—"to be sure not! who ever did, or ever could, or ever will earn a guinea in this wretched, horrible country? It's easy to get rid of 'em," he added, with a patronising air to the new-comers, "but ever to see one of 'em again, ah! you'll find a guinea a good sight for sore eyes! For my part, I haven't seen one for many a long day!"

"I know this," rejoined the surgeon, "that if I don't contrive to catch hold of some of them, I shall soon lose sight of the mutton-chops and dampers, and then what my wife and child will do is more than I can tell."

"But what is the reason, sir, if I might take the liberty to inquire, of your ill success? It may be a warning to me."

"Ill success, my good sir," replied the surgeon; "I don't know that I have had ill success where I have had the chance of doing anything; but there's nothing to do for my profession in this country."

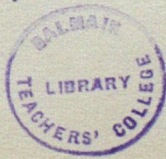
"How so?"

"Why, there's no illness."

"No illness!" said Mr. Marsh; "what do you mean?"

"There has been no sickness at the Clyde," said the surgeon, slowly and disconsolately, "ever since I have been here, and that's three years."

"What?" anxiously asked Mrs. Marsh; "no illness among





the children? no measles, no whooping-cough, or scarlet-fever?"

"Bless you, ma'am, there are no such things here. The stock diseases, as I may call them, don't exist in this country. The only chance of a job is when a stock-keeper gets a fall from his horse, or when we have a bit of a scrimmage with the natives or the bushrangers. But in this country wounds heal so quick, that before we have time to make anything of them, a man's well! Why, sir, wounds that in the old country would have been a living for a man, and complaints that would have formed a provision for his family after him, are nothing here! Positively they don't pay for plasters! It's starvation for a medical man!"

"It's shameful," exclaimed Crab, led away by his enthusiasm. "It's shameful, but it's all the same in this country. It's——"

"It's a strange country, this," said our new-comer, laughingly. "I heard before I came into it that everything was topsy-turvy, but I never expected people to complain because there was no illness in it, like these gentlemen."

"Complain," said the surgeon; "bless your hearts, you must not suppose that I find fault with the country because nobody is ill in it. Oh, no; it isn't that, only I can't live in it. It's Mr. Crab that complains: he finds fault with everything."

I observed that Crab was pondering on the matter as if a new light had broken in upon him, and I admired how his hard common-sense seemed to struggle against his prejudices. To complain of a country because there was no illness in it was almost too much, even for his habitual hallucinations; but his obstinacy prevailed. Striking his hard, bony hand on the table to give the greater emphasis to the expression of his opinion, he said—

"I'll tell you what it is, people mayn't be ill like, in this country, the same as they are in the old one; but what I say is this, they're never well, and if they could afford it—but in this wretched place they can't get a dollar to help themselves—I say if they could afford it, they would be ill, and then they would be got better in a proper way by the doctor, as they ought to be. Live and let live, I say; that's my opinion."

And so saying, he put on his hat with an air of considerable determination, and was about to leave the house.

Having certain misgivings, however, in his mind, that the very decided opinions to which he was pleased to give expression were not conclusive on the matter, he endeavoured to

back them up by a more forcible illustration, and turning round with one hand on the latch of the door, and the other extended to that angle of inclination which he considered most effective for oratorical persuasion, he addressed the strangers with an impressive gravity:—

"Now, gentleman and lady, don't you be gulled into sinking your money in this country; it's all bad, and everything's bad. My friend here was only just saved the other day from being shot by the bushrangers and burnt by the natives. P'raps you don't know that there's a bushranger or a native behind every tree ready to pounce on you, and devour you! I tell you the whole country's nothing but convicts. No man can say his life's his own any day, nor his property neither! When you lie down to sleep, it's ten to one you'll get up next morning with your throat cut, and most likely find your whole flock driven away. One night my sheep——"

"Oh! you've tried sheep, sir," said Mr. Marsh. "Have you many?"

"A matter o' two thousand, or thereabout; but they're a desperate trouble, and I'm sure I wish I was well rid of 'em."

"What made you buy them, then, as your opinion of the colony is so bad?"

"Heaven knows! The wisest may be wrong sometimes! It was my friend here that over-persuaded me, I can't tell how, to buy a hundred of 'em about seven years ago, and now they've increased to a couple of thousand to plague me! They worrit me to death do those sheep, and there's a lot of their wool lying up at the stock-yards there, on t'other side of the country, and how to cart it away I don't know, and where to put it I can't tell, for nobody will give me more than sixpence a pound for it on the spot! Such a place as this! No fairs or markets handy, and no roads where you want them, and every handful of wool must go all the way in a ship to England to be sold—that is, if the ship isn't wrecked, which it always is, or burnt—for the wool of this country catches fire of its own head when it's put in a ship—'specially when there's oil along with it, for they catch whales, I'm told, just at the mouth of the river—more fools they for coming——"

"I beg pardon, sir," interrupted Mr. Marsh, "but it seems to me you are wandering from the subject. You were saying that you bought one hundred sheep seven years ago, and that they have now increased to two thousand. That appears rather encouraging. Surely that is a great gain from a small outlay?"



"Gain!" said Crab, "not a bit of it. I've lost this very year forty pounds by 'em."

"Indeed! how so?"

"How so! why, I sold two-and-thirty wethers to a butcher for five-and-twenty shillings a head; they were two year old, and as fine mutton as ever you'd wish to see. I took his note of hand at two months, and now he says he can't pay me. No; of course he can't! So he's given me another note at two months, with interest at ten per cent.—that'll be another loss—and that's the way everybody is ruined in this country."

"Upon my word," said Mr. Marsh, "you puzzle me, sir. You tell me of one hundred sheep increasing to two thousand in seven years, and of your selling wethers at five-and-twenty shillings a head, and of getting ten per cent. for your money! I confess it appears to me, that so far as you describe it, the country seems a capital country to make money in."

"Puzzle you!" said Crab, who had listened with no little impatience and indignation to the stranger's interpretation of his descriptions—"puzzle you! I dare say it does puzzle you! It has puzzled me; but I tell you this, Mister, if you don't get home again pretty quick, it will puzzle you to get out of the country at all! And when you find that you can neither stop in it nor get out of it, that will be the greatest puzzle of all, as it has been to more than one poor settler in this country, ha! ha!"

And with this triumphant observation, as Mr. Crab evidently considered it, and with an extraordinary gruff chuckle, which he was wont to indulge in when he was unusually well pleased with himself, that worthy individual, like a skilful general, retreated from the contest; and in the society of Bob and the working bullocks, who were waiting with the plough, he soon forgot the temporary anger which had been excited by the tenor of the stranger's extremely unpalatable observations.

"That seems to be a very extraordinary man," observed Mrs. Marsh, "if I might take the liberty to say so; his opinion of the country does not seem to be very favourable; but if he finds the country so bad, why has he stayed in it so long?"

"Mr. Crab has his own little ways," said my wife; "but you are not used to them as we are. I assure you you will find the country a very pleasant one, if you do not expect too much at first."

We were aroused up early next morning by a party of the

colonial surveyor's men, who came to measure some land in our district; and we were exceedingly surprised to receive a letter of formidable dimensions, and bearing a prodigious seal, addressed to "Mr. Samuel Crab, River Clyde." As soon as that worthy individual had emerged from his dormitory, I placed the letter in his hands, and being anxious to know what had given rise to a correspondence between him and the Colonial Government, I urged him to break the seal. In the meantime the news of the arrival of this unusual missive had caused all the inmates to hasten from their rooms, and presently the whole family was assembled to witness the ceremony of opening the letter.

I have often regretted there was no artist present to take a sketch of the party assembled on this interesting occasion. It was still early morning; the shutters had been hastily and partially thrown open, and the grey light streaked through the windows, while the flames of the dry wood, which burnt and crackled on the capacious hearth, diversified the lights and shadows of the rude apartment. The women suspended their usual avocations, and grouped themselves round Crab with unrestrained curiosity. That interesting personage stood in the midst; in one hand he held a colonial hat, ingeniously fabricated from the skin of a kangaroo, with the hairy side outwards; and in the other he upheld the mysterious letter—peering into it with curious eye, and with an odd expression of countenance, as if he half doubted and half mistrusted the contents of the epistle.

"'Mr. Samuel Crab!' that's me, sure enough; but what on earth the Governor can have to say to me is more than I can think. 'Mr. Samuel Crab!' It must be me; but what it can be about is a wonder surely!"

"Suppose you were to open it," said Betsy, a little pertly; "perhaps the inside would tell you."

"Open it!—well—do you open it, Miss, as you're so curious; but don't break the seal—why, there must be red ochre enough in that seal to ruddle a sheep! Just tear round it gently; that's the way; well, now, what does it say?"

"Good gracious! Mr. Crab, here's an order for a grant of land for YOU!"

"A grant of land for ME! the thing's impossible! What do I want with land when I'm going to leave the colony, maybe, in another week, only what to do with those sheep worrits me—there's nothing but plagues in this country—it can't be for me; there's some mistake!"



"No mistake at all," said I; "here's the order plain enough. Four hundred acres of land! Well, my friend, you have got your wish at last; and now you have land of your own, what will you do with it?"

"Land of my own!—do with it!—why, what should I do with it? What's the use of land to me when I'm going to leave the colony directly? And where could I find four hundred acres of land worth looking at? There's scarcely an acre of good land in the colony—that's a fact—unless it's so covered with trees that you can't squeeze your way through 'em."

As my excellent friend thus expressed himself, I fancied I observed in his manner a confusion and embarrassment, coupled with a secret inclination to possess himself of the land, that I could not but suspect indicated some foreknowledge of this grant, which he was pleased to regard as totally unsuspected.

"You were down in Camp," said I, "about two months ago, Crab, were you not?"

"To be sure I was."

"And did you not see somebody in particular there?"

"I saw nobody but a pack of knavish storekeepers, who would cheat a man of the eyes out of his head, if he'd let 'em. I was talking to one of those chaps on the jetty, where I went to see if there were any ships sailing for England; he's one that I deal with for the slops and things that I want for my stock-keepers, which he cheats me in, of course; and he said that if I applied to the Governor he had no doubt that I might get a small grant of land, if I had a couple of thousand of sheep, and the Government, he said, liked to encourage industrious farming men, that are really farmers, and not cockney creters that don't know at which end of a sheep to begin a-shearing at."

"And so you asked the Governor?"

"Not I! But the store-keeper chap wrote a letter to the Governor, asking a grant of land, and I signed it, for a joke like, for I never expected anything would come of it; and a pretty passion the Governor will be in, I dare say, when he comes to know that I asked for a grant of land, and all the while was a-looking out for a ship to leave the colony."

"But you have been going to leave the colony every day for the last seven years, and you have not gone yet. Perhaps you may stay seven years more, and then the land will be of use to you. Besides, at your years——"

"At my years! Well to be sure!—and what's my years? I'm only sixty-eight; and I haven't had a day's illness once

the whole seven year, except the time of the christening that you all drunk so much rum punch, when the climate had such an effect on me, and gave me a dizziness in the head—it's so changeable."

"Exactly," said I; "the changeableness of the climate has certainly a peculiar effect on some people, and on occasions of christening it is apt to produce dizziness and other disorders; but that has nothing to do about your land. I know of a prime little bit, with a capital run for a small flock, not more than half a dozen miles from here."

"Ah! Cherry-Tree Bottom. That's a niceish bit; I remember the letter said something about Cherry-Tree Bottom; the deuce of a bit of a cherry will you find there, though; but there's no water carriage."

"Water carriage! You don't want water-carriage for sheep; they can carry themselves with their tails behind them, can't they?"

"Well—I can't say but that lot of land at Cherry-Tree Bottom is a fairish piece for this country. But it's only wasting it to give it to me, as I shan't be in the country long enough to make use of it."

"But you won't do any harm to it, I suppose; you can't take it away with you when you go."

"No, sure-ly not; that's very true. Well—it is a niceish bit. Do you know, I've a notion you might grow hops in that bottom. I put the spade in it one day, and my eyes! if it isn't all loam as far as you can dig, as black as your hat, for I don't know how deep!"

"I see," said I, "that you have an inkling for it; so we had better have it measured at once, as the surveyors are in the district."

"Well, well; do as you like. Measure away; but if you think I'd stay in this country for all the land that's in it, you are much mistaken; that's all I can say about it."

"Why, you can sell it if you don't like it," said I, "and I'll buy it of you."

"Will you, though?" said Crab. "Well, that's very friendly of you, I must say; but it's worth nothing."

"It's worth a dollar an acre, at any rate; but whatever it may be worth, I'll engage to buy it of you. I think it's worth two hundred pounds down, as it is."

"But what's the use of that? I can't sell it till I've had it three years, and used it as a farm. I declare," he continued, looking through the window, "there's that young fellow coming that killed my bull, and he wants it, I know; but he shan't have it, I'll be hanged if he shall. I'm first,



and I've the first right to it, and I'll have it, or I'll know the reason why."

And so it was settled; the pleasure of preventing young Beresford from having this particular bit of land having more weight with Crab than all the arguments we could make use of, so strong was his anger against the slayer of his pet bull. I shall have to show, however, hereafter, how Crab was disappointed in this vindictive determination.

The assistant-surveyor was polite, and his men were ready, so after breakfast we set off to Cherry-Tree Bottom, taking two of my men with axes to mark the trees.

"Now," said Crab, when we arrived at the spot, "I'll have this bit just here, do you see; beginning at this gum-tree, and going over the point of that little rise just across the rivulet yonder."

"I'll soon see," said the surveyor, "how the lines run, and you can begin where you like."

"How the lines run!" said Crab; "what's that to me? The lines may run which way they like; but I want this bit of land, and this is the bit I'll have measured."

"Your side-lines," replied the surveyor, "must be drawn according to the colonial regulations, parallel with the rest, or there would be nothing but a confusion of blocks and angles. Now for it; that is the direction of your side-line: where shall I begin?"

"You shall never begin for me," said Crab, very angrily, "if I can't have the bottom. It's all scrub, except just here."

"Let us see," said I, "if we can't manage it. Suppose you begin at this mimosa-tree to the left; then your base-line will extend to that little green hill, and so you would take in all the best part of the rivulet, and the whole of the bottom."

"Well, measure away," said Crab; "it doesn't matter; I shan't be here long to be worried with your side-lines and your angles, as you call 'em—though there's not much angling to be had in that puddle, I'm thinking—measure away, and let's have done with it, and not lose such a day as this for ploughing."

The surveyor adjusted his instrument accordingly, and his two men going before with their chain, we followed after, marking the trees as we went along by slicing off a piece of the bark, front and back, on each side of the trees that formed the boundary-line. The survey was soon concluded, and then Mr. Crab, regarding his landed possessions with a condescending eye—

"I say, Mister," said he to the surveyor; "don't you tell the Governor that I'm going home again, by the very next ship maybe; let that come of itself; no need to anger people before the time; and Governors, of all others, don't like to be made fools of."

"Never fear," said the good-natured surveyor; "I'll keep your secret, you may depend. I dare say I shall find you on your farm seven years hence."

"If you do," said Crab, "you shall eat me."

"Eat you!" said the surveyor, making an impromptu survey of Crab's extraordinary person and habiliments; "my dear sir, make yourself perfectly easy; I am quite satisfied with the survey without wishing to appropriate you in so exclusive a manner to myself; and now I must bid you good-day, and go to work in another direction."

With that he quitted us, and we returned homewards.

Crab said but little by the way for some time, but seemed to be ruminating on his new condition as a landed proprietor. At last he drew up, turning himself in the direction of his newly-acquired estate, and pointing towards it with his hand—

"Four hundred acres," said he, "would be thought a tidy farm in England; but how different things are here. In this country it's a scrap of land hardly worth the having; and if it wasn't for the free run at the back and about it, it wouldn't be worth occupying. Strange that, isn't it? If I had been given four hundred acres of land of my own in England! Lord! it would have made a squire of me!"

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE STOLEN CHILD.

It was on a fine winter morning, in the month of July, that I put the saddle on my horse for a ride to Hobart Town to inquire for the bushranger's daughter. Some snow had fallen in the night, and it lay on the ground about an inch thick presenting an appearance of striking contrast with the ever-green foliage of the native trees and shrubs. The air was sharp, but bracing and pleasant, and of that exhilarating pureness and freshness which I have sometimes fancied peculiar to this island. Crab stood by with his hand on the holster; he was thoughtful that morning. His new dignity as a land proprietor sat uneasily upon him, and it was plain that an inward struggle was going on between the temptation



to make use of his land, and the embarrassment of his habitual vituperation of the colony.

"I suppose," said he, "I must build some sort of a hut on the land, to show that it's mine—not that it matters whether it's mine or anybody else's, for the short time that I shall stay here. But I must get some money to pay for the things, if there's a dollar to be had in the colony, which I don't believe. Do you carry your pistols loaded?" lifting up the cover of one of the holsters, and exposing to view the brass butt-end of one of the large horse-pistols which formed my usual companions in my journeys to town.

"Best to be prepared, Crab," said I; "I carry them for use, not for show; and what's the use of an empty barrel in a hurry?"

"Very true. It's dreadful to think of the horrid condition of this place, where a man can't step outside his own door without pistols and blunderbusses. But I must try to get to the other side of the country, and sell a matter of a couple o' hundred of sheep or so, that I may have money to make things tidy a bit at the bottom yonder. It's too late to put in any cuttings, but I think we may make a good garden there, and in two or three years I may gather an apple from my own tree, on my own land—that is, somebody else may, because, of course, I shall not be here: and we may have some real cherries, not those outlandish things, like a hawthorn berry squashed, with the stone growing outside! I'm determined to see if hops won't grow there, and grow they shall, or I'll know the reason why! And only to think of making my own beer with hops grown on my own land! It would be a charity to teach the folks here how to do it."

I admired the contradictory emotions which I saw perplexed my old friend, and I took care not to check his aspirations after a farm of his own. I encouraged him, therefore, to go over his sheep-runs and dispose of some stock to meet his necessary outlays.

I rode leisurely on to town, stopping for about two hours at the Green Ponds. As soon as I had seen my horse properly taken care of, I set about the principal object of my journey, and walked to the part of the town where the person who had charge of the bushranger's orphan resided. I tapped at the door, and was surprised not to receive any answer. I tried the latch, and found that the door opened easily; there was no particular appearance about the house, so far as I could observe, for it was empty.

There was nothing for me to do but make enquiries, and

as the tragedy which had vacated the house was being investigated by the authorities, I was soon gratified.

The child had been removed by unknown persons and concealed in a ruined hut on Sevenille Beach. But learning that the police were afoot, the abductors had gone over in a wherry to Kangaroo Point, and had such a start that to track them would be a regular task for trained hands.

Fortunately for my quest, some papers had fallen under the magistrate's hands which suggested that the Gipsy's daughter was the heiress of George Shirley, Esq., of Yorkshire, an important personage. The magistrate, therefore, resolved on the man-hunt for her recovery, and the punishment of the kidnappers. He consented to my going along.

Besides us, there were two constables, Scroggs and Sanders.

We tracked the two scoundrels to a little short of Ross Bridge, on the Macquarie. Here it seemed the fugitives had misgivings of the prudence of proceeding on the highway, for within half a mile of the bridge they crossed the road, and made a circuit to the right.

"They don't like to chance the bridge," said one constable. "Now, if their point is Launceston, they must either swim the river, or make for the ford. There is one higher up the stream, but it's a long round; do you know it, Scroggs?"

"Know it! ay, and many's the time I've crossed it; but they'll never go all that way round; they'll take to the water, you'll see, when we come to the bend."

But in this he was mistaken, for we passed the bend, and the tracks continued to a spot about half a mile from the ford, near which there was a clump of mimosas standing apart on the plain, and at a short distance from a forest of thickly-growing trees. At this place they had evidently made a halt, for the ground was trampled down within a small circumscribed space, as if they had been hiding there for a time. We did not wait to examine it further, but pushed on in the direction of the ford. But here a sight met our eyes that explained the cause of the halt and the hiding of the fugitives. The quick-eyed Sanders was the first to detect the traces of numerous naked feet.

"Pull up!" he cried out,—"pull up for a minute. Look, sir, the natives have been prowling about here. Look to the right there. Don't press the marks—let us see how many of the black fellows have been together."

We drew up on the margin of the tracks of the natives, which were in the direction of the ford, and it seemed as if



there had been about twenty of them, to judge from the confused prints of their naked feet.

"I'll bet a guinea," said Saunders, "this is what made 'em hide for a while among those mimosas. They saw the natives between them and the ford, and they feared to face them."

"Keep on," said the magistrate, "their tracks lead to the ford—and I think I see some object on the bank of the river."

He was right; a few minutes' trot brought us to the ford, and by the side of the stream was lying a man in a fustian dress, whose countenance I thought I remembered. On examining him more closely the police recognised a convict.

The poor wretch was still alive, but his skull was pounded in by the waddies of the natives, and his body was pierced in many places by their thin and pointed spears.

"If we could only get him to speak now," said the constable, "he might give us some useful information. Scroggs, where's your bottle?"

Upon this the provident Scroggs produced a pint bottle of rum—a sovereign remedy, in his opinion, for all disorders.

"What's the use of giving him rum if he's dead?" remonstrated Scroggs; "it's only wasting it that way."

"He's not dead," said Sanders, "though it won't be long first, seemingly. Let us try to make him speak; he may be able to tell us of the other one. It's Bill Simmons, one of the biggest rascals in the whole colony, but that's no matter now. Give us the bottle."

He raised up the expiring wretch, and Sanders poured down his throat a portion of the rum, while the magistrate dashed some cold water from the river over his head and face. For a considerable time the man gave no other signs of life than a faint breathing, and it was not until after the lapse of two hours, which seemed to us two ages, that he was able to articulate.

"They have got the child," murmured out the dying man.

"Who have got the child?"

"The natives—they—attacked—me in—the ford."

"And your companion, where is he?"

"I saw him swimming in the river—but—in his haste—he abandoned—the child—to save himself—and the natives took the child—the Gipsy—the Gipsy—the Gipsy's child!"

"Did the natives kill the child?" asked I, full of anxious horror at the probable fate of the poor girl.

"They—have—killed—me. Their waddies—my head—spears—child . . . carried off—"

"How long ago is it," asked the magistrate, "since they attacked you?"

"I—don't know—it—was—just—at—daybreak. I didn't—like to pass the bridge—so—I made for the ford—and the natives—attacked us—and they have taken the—child——"

"What's o'clock," asked Sanders.

"Half-past ten," said I.

"Then the natives have got the start of us by about four hours and a half," resumed the constable; "and if they have taken to the hills it will be a difficult job to follow them on horseback."

"We can easily track them in the snow," observed the magistrate.

"While the snow lasts," replied the constable; "but, by the look of Ben Lomond, we shall have a change of weather, and there's a northerly wind this morning, and that, with the sun, will soon melt this snow. Following the natives in the bush is no easy matter. A white man might as well try to track a bird as a native in the bush!"

"I shall go after them," said the magistrate; "what do you say, Thornley; shall we leave this little girl to the mercy of the savages?"

"I'm ready to go with you," said I, "but let us go prepared; this is a bad time of the year for bushing it. Is there no place near here, Sanders, where we could borrow some kangaroo-rugs, and get a supply of provisions?"

"I have it!" said Sanders; "Mark's sheep-run is not more than two miles from the ford, and if he will let one of his shepherds, Black Tom, go with us—he's a Sydney native—we'll set a black fellow to hunt black fellows, and come over them that way."

"Come on, then," said the magistrate, "and lose no time. I will go with you to remove any objection. Stay! the dying man is going to speak again. I think he understood what we were saying. What is it, my man?" he added, in a soothing tone to the dying man; "what have you got to say?"

"Mus—quee—to!" said the man, with his last breath.

"Musquito!" said Sanders, "then there's no time to be lost; that's the cruellest savage that ever tormented a colony; he kills for killing sake, without reason."

"I have had a taste of him," said the magistrate. "There's no time to be lost, if we are to save the child."

The magistrate, guided by Sanders, immediately galloped off; and in less time than we expected, they returned at a brisk pace, laden with kangaroo rugs, and various necessities for a bush expedition, and followed by Tom, a fine tall native



of the continental island of Australia, dressed with much neatness, in a cloth jacket and trousers of good texture; the civilised natives soon catching the colonial predilection for cloth of a superior quality.

"Will not the native, being on foot, retard us?" inquired I; "he can never keep up with our horses."

"Never fear," said Sanders; "if our horses can keep up with him we shall do very well. Now, Tom, my boy, are you ready?"

Tom nodded his head.

"Which way are you going to take us!" Tom looked at the tracks, among which the prints of tiny feet were plainly discernible, and pointed to the hills.

"Now," said the magistrate, "for another adventure. I never had a hunt after natives before. Not the best of weather for lying out at nights; but it would never do to leave that little girl to be butchered by Musquito!"

We moved on at a good pace, Tom with his long legs keeping our horses just beyond a quick walk, and we were soon buried in the deep recesses of the woods. The dense mass of spreading branches, with their winter leaves of sombre green, which formed a canopy high above our heads, had allowed but little snow to fall on the forest ground; but there were ample signs of the natives to enable the sagacious Sydney black to guide us through the intricacies of the tall straight stems of the stringy-bark trees, with their ragged, shreddy coats, without hesitation. Ever and anon he would turn round to us, without discontinuing his course, and displaying, with a self-satisfied grin, his formidable rows of ivory teeth, he would point to the track, and seek, with his piercing and restless black eyes, deep set in his woolly head, for our approbation of his sagacity.

It occupied us nearly two hours to pass through the forest, and we then emerged into an ample plain nearly clear of trees, resembling a vast park. The noonday sun had melted nearly all the snow, and it was only here and there, under the shade of some gigantic gum-tree or unbrageous mimosa, that any signs of it were visible. We were glad to get rid of the snow, as, under the guidance of the black, we had no fear of losing the tracks of the natives, and we pushed on without stopping for nearly twenty miles, in a south-easterly direction, over a fine country of undulating hill and plain, till we came to the foot of a tier of low hills, on which were scattered a few trees of the she-oak. These trees present a scraggy appearance to the eye, but their wood is much prized as fuel, from its pleasing fragrance and good qualities for

burning. It is not easy to get a plank from these trees of more than six or eight inches in width, but, when polished, it is admirably adapted for ornamental furniture. Here we made a pause to rest our horses, which we tethered out by the hide ropes, which we carried with us on the front of our saddles, giving them the range of a circle of about eighty feet in diameter, to feed on the native grass ; shifting them occasionally as their food grew scanty. The constables kindled a fire and proceeded with the usual arrangements for a bush meal.

They put a handful of black tea into the kettle, which Scroggs bore in his portion of the luggage, and set it on to boil—tea forming the favourite beverage of settlers of every degree in their bush expeditions. The dexterous black, who carried a long-shanked, narrow axe, quickly sliced from an adjacent gum-tree some pieces of bark, which formed extempore plates and dishes, and some steaks of young beef being duly boiled, aided by one of the dampers, which formed part of our provisions, we made, with the relish of hunger, a satisfactory repast. The constables then got up a second edition of the feast, with some additional supplies, for Black Tom, not liking to remain idle during our banquet, had contrived to catch three kangaroo-rats and a bandicoot, which he disembowelled with much delicacy, and threw them in their furry coats on some close embers of the fire. Scroggs produced from the recesses of a mysterious garment a bottle of rum, but it was unanimously decided that this luxury should be reserved as a medicine for special occasions. Much to the disappointment of that thirsty individual, therefore, the cork remained undrawn, and the disconsolate Scroggs was obliged to solace himself with a pannikin of hot tea from the boiling kettle. Our rough repast ended, we proceeded on our way till the sinking of the sun behind the snow-topped mountains to the west, warned us to turn our attention to the means of passing the night ; for the nights in the winter season in Van Diemen's Land are too cold to allow of their being passed with impunity in the open air. As we felt the fullest confidence of coming up with the natives, we did not push our horses to the extreme, for we knew that Musquito and his mob would not travel many days without making a stop in some locality favourable for the collection of gum, and the resort of opossums. We had but one axe among us, but there were more than one who knew well how to use it, the cleverest of whom was the Sydney black ; so that in a short time they managed to erect two bush-huts well covered in with heavy branches. The opening of the huts being next to the fire, which was kept up all night, we contrived, with the aid of our warm kangaroo-rugs, to pass the night without inconvenience.



Towards the early morning the air became frosty, and the next day, under a clear sky and a brilliant sun, we continued our pursuit of the natives. At noon the air became mild and warm, and if it had not been for our apprehensions of the calamitous fate of the child to whose rescue we were hastening, we should have enjoyed the beautiful scenery of the almost unexplored country through which we travelled; but a second day and night having passed without coming up with the natives, our uneasiness increased to a pitch of painful anxiety. We could discover no trace of the little foot, nor indeed could our less acute sense of sight detect any marks of the retiring natives, although to the black's stronger and more sensitive organs the marks were so plain as to cause him no apparent trouble to pursue. We consoled ourselves, however, with the reflection, that the absence of any mark of the child's foot which Tom could not trace might be accounted for by her having been carried in the arms of the natives, though what could be their object, or the object of Musquito in bearing her away, we were at a loss to conjecture, and feared the worst.

With these doubts and fears we passed an uneasy night, the more so as our provisions being nearly exhausted, we could not keep up the animal strength to counteract the depression of the spirits. Under circumstances so favourable for the opening of the grog bottle, the longing Scroggs made several insinuating attempts to get our assent to that measure, but it was steadily resisted, and with a stoicism on the part of his reflecting coadjutor which I particularly admired.

"Cold work this," said Scroggs to Sanders; "and cold water is poor stuff to put heart into a man. A fire is very well to warm the outside, but the inside is the place to keep up the heat; then it spreads all over one in a glow! It's surprising how small a quantity of spirit—a single glass or so—I've often tried it—will warm a man's whole body, to the very tips of one's fingers!"

"To the tip of your nose, you ought to say, old buck," rejoined his mate, "for you have put that sponge of yours into such a glow some time, that it has never got cool again."

"None of your nonsense;—it's all owing to smoking out of a short pipe; I went to sleep with it one night in my mouth, and I slept so sound, though I had drunk nothing to speak of, that the end of my nose got briled on the bowl of the pipe before I woke up."

"I wish you had thought to bring two bottles, instead of one," said Sanders, "then you might have soaked your nose in one and kept the other. But you don't know what may

happen in the bush, and a sup of rum may save a man's life. Better keep it till it's wanted."

"But it is wanted," persisted the persevering Scroggs; "I declare I feel so queer I don't know what to make of it; and that bit of opossum that I was fool enough to eat makes me smell all turpentine. What harm could it do," he added, in a melancholy tone, "if I took only the least sip in the world—just a taste—only a smell at the bottle?"

But Sanders was firm, and as Scroggs stood too much in awe of the magistrate to venture on so flagrant a breach of duty as a burglary on the rum bottle, he betook himself sadly to bed, and covering himself up in his kangaroo-rug, after a few dolorous moanings, the sounds which proceeded from his fiery nose proclaimed that he was sound asleep.

The next morning found them much less fresh than the preceding one, and no one seemed inclined for conversation, our spirits being damped by the unsuccessful pursuit, and by the contemplation of the uncertain distance to which we might be led in our chase, and of the uncertain time which might be consumed in it. We had bivouacked at the base of a tier of hills, and it was not without anxiety that we shared the remainder of our provisions, and prepared for the steep ascent before us.

We had not proceeded far, however, when, on some moist ground beneath a spring, which trickled down the hill, Black Tom pointed out to us the fresh mark of a native foot. We were heading our horses up the ascent, and it was with lively curiosity that we regarded the sign of the probable propinquity of the natives. We immediately looked to our arms, wiped our flints, renewed our primings, and examined our barrels, to see that the charges had not become loosened in the journey. The prospect of danger spread animation among the party, mixed with some anxiety, for we had by this time penetrated into a part of the country never, perhaps, trodden before by a white man's foot, and far removed from all assistance. We advanced, therefore, with great precaution till we got close to the summit of the hill, when the magistrate directed us to stand still, and motioned the black to reconnoitre.

Tom advanced cautiously and silently upwards, crawling on his belly, and winding his way like a snake over the tufts of grass, till he was enabled to project his black poll—hardly to be distinguished from the rough logs of charred timber that lay about over the ridge of the hill. For some seconds he remained motionless, and then, withdrawing himself by imperceptible degrees from his place of observation, he communicated to us the result of his discovery.



"Black fellows in bottom," said Tom softly; "Musquito with 'em."

"What are they doing?" asked the constable.

"Make fire—and eat."

"Is the piccaninny with them?" said I.

"Can't see. Go behind trees, there," continued Tom, pointing to the right, "then you see all."

On the right was a clump of bushes, to which we bent our steps.

Leaving our horses under the charge of the constables, we edged round the declivity of the hill and crept up to the top, where we stationed ourselves behind the bushes. From this position we observed the natives in the hollow below. They had evidently arrived at a spot at which they proposed to sojourn for a while, for they had raised up in two or three places, and with more than usual care, break-winds formed of branches and trees, and lined with wide strips of bark. These rude protections from the wind were about four feet high, and we remarked that one apart from the rest had the distinction of an attempt at a roof, but of dimensions not more than sufficient to contain a single person. Large fires were lighted before the break-winds, at which some of the natives reclined; others were standing listlessly here and there, and some of the women were engaged in tending their children. Almost the whole party was naked; but one man, whom by his stature and bearing we recognised as Musquito, was distinguished by a black hat, with waistcoat and trousers, and one or two of the women had something which looked like old and dirty blankets thrown over their shoulders. We remained for some time watching them from our hiding-place, but we could observe no signs of the child whom we had come so far to rescue; and we had had misgivings of her safety. Having made all the observations in our power, we retreated back to the brow of the hill, and consulted together as to the best course to pursue.

"If you would be pleased to take my advice, sir," said Sanders, "I would wait till night, when the natives are afraid to move about, and then, by advancing two together, we might take them by surprise, and the first thing would be to shoot down Musquito, and the men of the party, and then if they run away with the child—that is, if they haven't murdered it already, which I think most likely—we can pursue them with our horses, for they're terribly afraid of a horse; they think it bites, and fights with its fore-legs."

"I confess," said the magistrate, "I am very much disappointed not to see the little girl; our object is to release

her, not to slaughter these naked savages. Did you ever know them to eat a white person? Let us find out from Tom; do you speak to him, Sanders; he knows you, and would tell you perhaps more freely than us."

"Tom," said Sanders, "black fellow eat white piccaninny?"

Tom looked suspiciously at the constable with his deep-set, restless eyes, one of the characteristics of the natives of Australia, and seemed unwilling to reply; for the Sydney blacks, as well as the few who have communication with the settlements of Van Diemen's Land, are well aware of the horror of the whites at the practice of eating human flesh.

"Tom never eat man," said Sanders, coaxingly, "no—never; but bad black fellow eat man, and eat piccaninny sometimes?"

"Bad black fellow eat man sometimes," replied Tom, "while he very angry and fight;—me never eat man."

"No, not you; but black man eat white man, sometimes?"

"Yees."

"And eat white piccaninny sometimes; bad black fellow."

"Yees—bad black fellow."

"The nasty inhuman savages!" exclaimed Scroggs, who was within hearing, holding the horses. "To think of that poor little gal being eat by those black devils, just as if she was mutton or beef! Here, Sanders, come and put your hand in my pocket, and take out the bottle of rum; take it, I say! I, for one, will give it up, and let the natives have it for the child. I should like to have just one sup of it before it goes; but never mind, I'll give it all, rather than the child should be eat up by those black rascals!"

"Well done, Scroggs," said the magistrate; "depend upon it this generous instance of self-denial shall not be forgotten, for I know the effort which it must have cost you; but I think we can manage without putting your virtue to so severe a trial. Tom," said he to our guide, "will you go and try if you can see a little white piccaninny among the black fellows? Piccaninny so high," describing the height of a child of six or seven years of age.

Tom understood what was said to him in English much more easily than he could find words to reply. He comprehended the magistrate in a moment, and looking on the ground for a while in a thoughtful attitude—

"Me go," said he,

Without further talk, for the natives are remarkably



taciturn and sententious among themselves, as well as among the whites, Tom proceeded to strip himself of the encumbrance of his clothes, even to his shoes and stockings, and displayed himself in the natural undisguise of our great progenitor, Adam. The disencumbered Tom formed his plan on the instant, and taking a wide circuit to the left, he was soon lost to view, leaving us in a state of anxious and nervous expectation.

After the lapse of an hour he returned, and in the cold apathetic manner of the natives he communicated his information with his usual sententious brevity—

"White piccaninny with black fellows."

"That's capital!" said the magistrate; "the poor little thing is alive, at any rate. How does she look, Tom?"

But Tom did not understand this question, but seeing that an answer was expected, he replied—

"Piccaninny in little house," describing by gesture the single break-wind which we had observed from behind the bushes.

"What are they going to do with the piccaninny?" said I.

"Eat her, I'll be bound," said Scroggs; "that's what they're going to do with her; and they are fattening her up in that pen as we do a lamb, till she's in good condition. The black villains! Let us march right at 'em and shoot 'em down, every one. I'm ready for it!"

"There is something in this," observed the magistrate, "which I cannot understand. It is difficult sometimes to penetrate into the motives of savages; but as they seem at present to be in a peaceful humour, I think our best plan is to send on Tom a little in advance to parley with them, and to assure them that we have no hostile intentions. We can follow immediately behind him on horseback, with our arms ready, in case of their showing fight; but as we shall take them by surprise, I think it very likely that they will not attempt any resistance. You all know that it is the particular desire of the Colonial Government, which is conformable, indeed, with sound policy and with humanity, never to commit an aggression on the natives uselessly and without the most pressing necessity; but on all occasions to treat them with benevolence and tenderness, and to endeavour to win them over by acts of kindness, instead of alienating them by the wanton or thoughtless exercise of superior power."

"If you please, sir," said Sanders, "Musquito has committed more than one murder, and he's a Sydney black and ought to know better. We have orders from Camp to endeavour to take him if we should have the opportunity."

"We shall act according to circumstances," replied the magistrate. "At present our object is to rescue the child from the clutches of the savages ; and in doing that we must endeavour to avoid shedding blood."

I agreed with the magistrate in the propriety of his mode of action, and although I had a strong presentiment that there would be a murderous conflict, I relied on the superiority of our arms and our horses, and had little doubt of the result.

We descended the hill, therefore, and forming ourselves into the order laid down by our leader, we moved round the hill to the right, that we might reach the level ground before we could be perceived by the natives, and advancing at a moderate pace, we soon found ourselves in front of their curious habitations.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE LOST CHILD RECOVERED.

THE Sydney black preceded us about twenty yards in advance, and as soon as he arrived within easy speaking distance of the natives, we pulled up, and with much anxiety waited for the issue of his conference. He had previously resumed his clothes, but it was easy for the natives to perceive by his colour and his features that he was allied to their general race. To our extreme surprise—although the aborigines of Van Diemen's Land have a strong antipathy to the natives of the continental island—our messenger was allowed to approach their fires without exciting the slightest visible sensation. Their simulated unconcern might have been produced, perhaps, by the sight of our party on horseback ; but the strangeness of this unexpected apathy on the part of Musquito and his companions made us fear some treachery, and we looked round to try if we could perceive any appearance of an ambuscade ; but we could detect nothing to excite suspicion. I have often had occasion to observe the dull, listless, and almost idiotic appearance of the natives of Van Diemen's Land, when not excited by hunger or some passionate desire. It has struck me, that in this respect they much resemble the unthinking beasts of the field, so inanimate and log-like is their usual manner. The women will sometimes chatter a little, for it seems nature makes them all alike as to that matter, but the men have the most reserved and taciturn habit of any race of savages that I have known or read of. The strange contrast of their silence and immobility



with the yells and wildness for which we were prepared, filled us with a vague sort of superstitious fear, which was heightened by the chilly stillness of the vast wilderness in which we were now enclosed.

In the meantime a monosyllable "corrobara" had taken place between our guide and the chief of the sable community, the meaning of which Tom concentrated in the following brief communication—

"Musquito say, you come."

"Why, what is the meaning of this?" said the magistrate. "They don't show any signs of fear, nor do they look as if they thought of fighting! Is there some stratagem in this? What do you think of it, Thornley?"

"Upon my word," I replied, "this takes me so much by surprise, I don't know what to think of it. Sanders, you know their ways, do you see any of their waddies or spears about?"

"One can never tell, sir," said Sanders, "what those treacherous savages are at; they're always hatching some devilry or other. You see, sir, I take it we have come on one of their places for encamping, if you can call those bits of break-winds camps. But Musquito can be civil enough, sometimes. Scroggs, you've often come across Musquito, what is he after now?"

"He's always after some wickedness," responded Scroggs; "but I think the natives are going to have a feast. Don't you see that string of opossums yonder, by the blue gum-tree? and there's something hanging up inside the bushes; the Lord have mercy on us, it must be the child! and the black devils are going to cook it for their dinner!"

"The child!" exclaimed the magistrate; "no, impossible! Tom saw the child alive a quarter of an hour ago! Go, Tom, ask Musquito if he has got the white man's piccaninny."

Tom made the inquiry accordingly, and presently returned with a reply.

"Musquito say, white man kill piccaninny, Musquito kill white man. Piccaninny in piccaninny house—there."

"This is very extraordinary," said the magistrate; "the most extraordinary thing that has occurred to me in all my adventures in the colony. What can be Musquito's object in this? However, as they seem quietly disposed, let us advance close to them, and try to get possession of the poor child by peaceable means."

"Better let two of us stand on guard, in case of any attack," suggested the constable; "no need, sir, for us all to be sacrificed."

"That is a very prudent precaution, Sanders; do you and Scroggs remain here in charge of the horses, and I and Mr. Thornley will go to them on foot—that is, if Mr. Thornley has no objection."

"None in the least," said I; "the best way with savages, and all animals in general, is to show that you have no fear of them."

"Better take my bottle of rum," suggested Scroggs, in the exuberance of his generosity: "let Musquito have a sup at it, and perhaps that will put him in good humour."

"No, no," said the magistrate, "keep the rum till we want it. A savage is awkward enough to deal with when he is sober, but with a little rum in him he is worse than a madman. Now, Thornley, let us go among them boldly."

Accordingly we went up to Musquito, who was standing by one of the fires in front of the little wigwam in which we had been given to understand the little girl of whom we were in search was secreted. He had, I thought, the same stupid and sullen look which I had remarked on other occasions, as he stood in the listless and dozing attitude which was usual with him when not engaged in any hunting or predatory expedition. A close investigation, however, might detect in his half-shut, but ever restless, eyes, a watchfulness that allowed nothing to escape his observation. I confess it was not without a little nervous apprehension, and some slight bumping in the region of my left side, that I approached the formidable savage in his lair. He raised up his eyes and glanced at us, but gave no sign of recognition, or of being affected by our presence.

We remained for a brief space in this unpleasant position, with the awkward feeling of having intruded on a gentleman's privacy without an invitation. Neither of us spoke—my friend being under the same difficulty as myself to hit upon an appropriate topic by which to commence a conversation with this chief of a band of savages, and the usual salutation of a "very fine day" seeming to me, under the circumstances, inappropriate to the individual and the occasion; but I was relieved by the magistrate breaking silence.

"Much kangaroo, Musquito, in this part of the country?"

"Boomah—there," replied Musquito, pointing out an immense kangaroo in the bushes, which had attracted the attention of the horrified Scroggs.

My excellent friend presuming, I suppose, that eating and drinking among friends facilitated conversation, and being stimulated besides by certain internal promptings that his fast had continued for more than a reasonable time, immediately intimated to his new acquaintance his inclination for a steak.



Musquito uttered a few words to one of his retinue, and without further ceremony some pieces of the kangaroo were brought to us; we motioned to them to put the venison on the fire, which they did with a readiness to oblige which inspired us with some confidence in their present sincerity.

When the meat was cooked, we sat down on the ground on which Musquito also squatted down opposite. Some of his companions stood at a little distance, eyeing us with much curiosity, but without rudeness; and in this way, with a charming absence of all ceremony, we partook of a social meal with our new acquaintance, but in perfect silence.

Thinking the occasion favourable, I suggested to my friend the expediency of propitiating our host by a glass of rum, as an appropriate introduction to the object of our journey. The magistrate agreed with me, and called quietly to Scroggs to bring the bottle and a pannikin.

I observed that Musquito gave a flash with his eyes at the magistrate's call, and gathered up his legs under him ready for a spring, upon which I instantly called to Scroggs—

"Show the bottle of rum!"

Scroggs raised on high his long-cherished bottle, at the view of which I saw that Musquito's eyes resumed their usual expression, and he quietly returned to his former position of repose. Meanwhile the disappointed Scroggs, with his mouth watering at the sight of a repast in which he did not share, and his eyes becoming tearful at the prospect of the total consumption of his beloved rum, approached with slow and reluctant steps to resign his treasure.

"These savages, sir," said he, in an insinuating way, to the magistrate, "are very suspicious—very. If you like, sir, I will taste a little of the rum first—that he may see it is all right, and that we mean no harm to him. Allow me to take out the cork?"

"Make haste back," said the magistrate, "and mount your horse, that you may be ready to act in case of need. This rum may be of service to us, and we don't want it for our own drinking; we can get plenty more when we go home."

So saying, my friend took summary possession of the bottle which the disconsolate Scroggs relinquished with a pitiable sigh, and the salt and savour of life having now departed from him, he resumed his seat lugubriously on the back of his horse with his hapless body, leaving his soul behind him in the bottle.

The magistrate poured into the pannikin a portion of the rum with the same seriousness with which it might be supposed he would have offered a libation to the infernal gods, and, proffering it to the presiding deity of the spot, that

condescending personage turned it down with an off-handed dexterity which would have done honour to an inhabitant of the far-famed St. Giles' in the mother country, and with a gusto which overcame the habitual reserve of a native. He evinced his delectation at the imbibing of the liquor by a grim smile, which made me involuntarily grasp my fowling-piece a little closer, and slapping his breast, he held out the pannikin for a fresh supply. But we thought this a fit opportunity to enter into some sort of treaty for the restoration of the child.

"Musquito kill white man?" said the magistrate; "why Musquito kill white man?"

"White man great rascal," replied Musquito; "try kill piccaninny—Musquito kill him."

"Why Musquito take piccaninny?" pursued my friend; "Musquito want to keep piccaninny and make her gin to black man?"

Musquito shook his head, and it seemed to me if he had known how he would have laughed at this inquiry.

"Piccaninny white!" said he; "not good for black man."

"Why take piccaninny?" persisted my friend; "why save her from bad white man?"

It seemed that Musquito suddenly understood what the magistrate was driving at, for his countenance assumed an appearance almost of intelligence, and he immediately replied—

"Gipsy's piccaninny; Gipsy die; Gipsy good to Musquito—he Musquito's brother; Musquito not let bad white man kill Gipsy's piccaninny."

My friend and I gazed at each other with astonishment at these words, and, reading each other's thoughts, we could not but admire the strange concatenation of events which had preserved the life of the bushranger's daughter from such imminent perils! But as I had been constituted guardian of that deceased character's child, I considered that there was a means of easy understanding, if I could make the native comprehend the nature of my legal and social position in respect to his temporary ward.

"Gipsy," said I, "Musquito's brother."

"Gipsy, Musquito's brother," repeated the black chief.

Thought I to myself, the Gipsy's family would not consider themselves very much flattered by this unexpected claim on their relationship by my black friend here, but at any rate he has done one good action to atone for his multitude of crimes, and so I will not flinch from claiming any right to be considered as a member of the family.

"Musquito," said I, "you know me?" He had been more



than once at my house with his mob, and had been regaled with damper and boiling-hot tea, plentifully sweetened with brown sugar, not forgetting an occasional glass of rum.

"You, Mister Thornley?" said Musquito.

"Yes," said I! "and I Gipsy's brother!"

Musquito gave me a quick look, which none but a savage could give, in which was expressed the blended wonder and suspicion which my assumption of relationship with the Gipsy had excited, and I continued—

"Gipsy, Musquito's brother; Gipsy, Thornley's brother; Thornley, Musquito's brother."

I wished to lead the savage by this ingenious process of ratiocination, as my friend the magistrate called it, in his jocose way, to consider me as an intimate friend and relation, for my object was to get possession of the child, with his concurrence, so as to avoid bloodshed. Musquito mused, I observed, for awhile, on these words, and then, with the caution of the savage, he asked—

"Why you Gipsy's brother?"

"The Gipsy," said I, "when bad white man kill him, say to me—'Give bread and meat to my piccaninny—little—so big'"—said I, describing the size of a child of six or seven years of age. "I say to Gipsy, 'Thornley, Gipsy's brother.'"

Musquito rose from his sitting position when I had said this, and spoke to one of his people, who disappeared, and presently returned with a tall and slender young lady of a bright black colour, who, from her air and pretensions, we immediately concluded was the favourite gin of the grim Musquito. A soldier's old jacket, without buttons and which, with a graceful negligence, remained open in front, formed an airy spencer suitable for summer or for winter wear, and a red cotton handkerchief tied round her woolly black poll gave her a superior air, which distinguished her from her less favoured associates of the seraglio. No other article of dress than that of which we have made modest mention, prevented the free exercise of her supple and well-formed limbs. As an honest historian I am obliged to record that her nose was very broad and very flat, but her eyes were large and bright. Various coquettish devices depicted in a mixture of resinous gum and red ochre formed a striking relief to the monotonous hue of her sable skin, and a fish-bone stuck through her nose added a finish to the splendour of her personal appearance.

To this amiable divinity Musquito gave some brief directions, and the lady retiring, quickly re-appeared, leading by the hand the timid and shrinking form of the Gipsy's daughter. I have often thought that when her fancy recalls

in after-life the romantic scenes of her early youth, the recollection of this memorable day must form a curious contrast with her present fortunes. She raised up her large black eyes, which instantly reminded me of the last wild look of the Gipsy bushranger, and sought among us for some familiar face; but meeting only with the countenances of strangers, she cast them down again in disappointment and sadness, as if doubtful whether to regard the white strangers as friends or foes,

"Georgiana," said I, softly.

The little thing started at the secret name, and clasping her tiny hands, she stood with one foot advanced, trembling and irresolute, while she searched me with her lustrous eyes, to discover in me some trace of a former friend.

I think I never saw so beautiful a child; she was the very picture of loveliness, and possessing that indefinable and irresistible charm with which infancy and innocence never fail to move the coldest human heart. Struck with the desolate condition of the child, and possessed with the sacred nature of the trust that I had taken on me, I held out my arms, and said to her in tones which touched her little heart,—

"Come to me, my poor little orphan girl; you shall be a daughter among my children, and I will be a friend and a father to you."

The child screamed with sudden joy; bursting into tears she bounded into my arms, and with passionate sobs hid her little face in my bosom.

The very savages were affected by the scene. The women gathered round us, gazing with earnest interest, and the harsher lineaments of the faces of the men became softened at the touch of nature, which makes the whole world kin.

"Look out, sir," cried Sanders, who, with Scrogg, had approached in this moment of excitement close to the mingled group; "take care they don't take you at a disadvantage. You never know when to trust a native."

"You've dropped the bottle," whined Scroggs; "there it is under your legs, and in another moment it will be broken, and all the rum will be lost."

"And now," said the magistrate to me, "let us get back to some place of settlement without loss of time, while we are all in good humour. We can easily carry the child with us on horseback. Now, my men," he continued to the constables, "keep your eyes about you; home's the word!"

We had to sleep one night in the bush, which we managed as well as we could, and towards the night of the next day we reached a stock-hut to the east of Salt-Pan Plains. Here we parted with Tom, the magistrate giving him an order on



a storekeeper at Launceston, to supply him with anything he pleased to the amount of five pounds; and cutting across the country to Oatlands, we were glad to repose ourselves at a comfortable inn. At this place we learnt that the uncle of Georgiana had escaped from the island on board the *Jupiter*.

The subsequent difficulties which my charge had to encounter I shall have to relate in their proper place. The constables, at my request, accompanied me to the Clyde, striking across the country by a short cut from Jericho. I rewarded them liberally for their activity and good conduct, giving Scroggs an order on the Bank at Hobart Town for a hundred dollars according to my promise. My wife and children received the stranger with an affectionate kindness and sympathy, which soon reached her little heart, and in a short time she considered herself as a child of the family. After recounting my adventures, and my escape from the cavern of the red-house, my wife scolding me, of course, for my rashness in running such a risk, I lost no time in turning my attention to the affairs of my farm, which had for so long a time been interrupted by the various accidents which had befallen me. On inquiring for Crab I was informed that he had set out for his sheep-run an hour or two after I had started for Hobart Town, and had not returned. His absence did not give me any uneasiness at the time; but another week having passed away without his appearance, I became alarmed, and begun seriously to think of setting out in search of him. As we were discussing the matter towards the close of the day, we observed our old friend proceeding across the meadow in the direction of the house. He seemed faint and exhausted, and his clothes were dirtied and stained with travel. He had a bundle on his shoulder, the weight of which seemed to oppress him, and he trudged along, leaning on a stick in a manner unusual to his vigorous habits. I immediately went out to meet him, and to assist him into the house. He sat himself down in the great chair with a deep sigh, casting his load on the floor, which rattled on the ground with a jingling crash.

"Thank God!" he said, "I'm at home again. I thought I should never have seen you more. Such a country as this is! No stage-coach!—no nothing! But it serves me right, I ought to have left it long ago; but now I have made up my mind. The next ship that goes takes me. There's nothing but wretchedness here; you'll be all ruined and murdered, every one—that's my opinion."

"Why, what has happened?" said I; "what on earth is the matter with you?"

"What has happened? why, everything has happened that

shouldn't happen! Ill tell ye if ye'll give me time; but first I must have something to eat. Oh! there's the mutton chops. Only let me get a little life into my body and then I'll tell ye."

## CHAPTER XX.

### CRAB'S MISADVENTURES.

"It's all owing to that bit of land at Cherry-Tree Bottom," said Crab, striking the table with his horny hand, to give greater emphasis to his position, and causing all the tea-things to give a simultaneous jump at the concussion. "It's all owing to hankering after that land which I had no business with, and it sarves me right, and it's a judgment on me! What have I to do with land in this outlandish place? If I hadn't let 'em give me that land, I shouldn't have wanted to build a house on it; and if I hadn't built a house on it I shouldn't have wanted to sell my sheep, and then I shouldn't have been plagued with those confounded dollars! But I'll go by the next ship! Betsy, my dear, write a letter for me, there's a good gal."

"With pleasure," said Betsy, who was the old man's favourite. "Who to?"

"To the storekeeper at Hobart Town—Mr. Stickitinem."

"What an odd name!"

"He's a sort of Dutchman, my dear, that supplies me with my things. I'd write myself, but living in this wretched country has hurt my eyes, and I never could see to read writing easy. I can make out big print very well when I know what it's about, as a chapter in the Bible or so. But I never did write much, because my hand is hard with holding the plough, and a little thing like a pen comes unnatural to it."

"What are you going to do with this handkerchiek full of dollars?" interrupted my wife. "I hope, Mr. Crab, you are not going to keep them here; it's a dangerous temptation in the bush."

"That's just what I don't know," observed Crab, sorrowfully; "ever since I've had 'em, that's the very question that everybody has asked me, and the very one I never could answer. But trouble enough have I had to get 'em, and I do believe they're the last dollars left in the colony."

"You have sold some sheep, I suppose," said I; "what did you get for 'em?"

"Nothing but mortification—and those dollars. One chap wanted three years' credit, and he offered thirty shillings



a-head—and then he offered forty shillings a head ; but I said 'Money down, that's my way of dealing ; that's the way I bought 'em, and that's the way I'll sell 'em.' Then another Launceston chap, he offered to give me I don't know how many head of cattle for 'em ; and says I, 'What are they ? wild cattle ?' 'Of course,' says he. 'And where may they be ?' says I. 'They're somewhere near Circular Head,' says he. 'Then,' says I, 'they may stay at Circular Head till their heads grow where their tails are ; I'll have nothing to do with wild cattle, that go scampering about all over the island, and you never know where to find 'em when you want 'em.' At last a new settler, that had heard mine were fine-woolled sheep, came and said he'd buy four hundred of 'em.

" 'How do you mean to pay ?' said I. 'Bank notes,' said he, 'of the Bank of Diemen's Land.'

"I don't know how it was—I was over-persuaded, for he was a terrible talking-chap, and if ever anyone had the gift of the gab, it was he. And so we went to my sheep-run at the back of Norfolk Plains, and then the dispute began. He wanted to pick the ewes, all the young 'uns, and the best, though, for the matter of that, they're all good ; but I said 'No ; that's a thing I won't always permit. Take 'em as they run out of the yard.' Then he talked at me I suppose for half an hour, to convince me that the buyer had a right to pick 'em ; but I wasn't going to be convinced by the likes of him, and so I said, 'Take 'em or leave 'em, at a pound a head's my price, money down, as they run out of the yard.' Then he proposed that we should each pick one till he had taken his four hundred. Well, I thought that was reasonable, and so we managed it that way. When he had pitch-marked 'em with his brand, and was going to drive 'em away, says I—'Where's the money ?' 'Give me a pen and ink,' said he, in an off-handed way, 'and I'll give you a cheque.' 'A cheque ?' says I ; 'I want none of your cheques—it's the money I want.' 'Then,' says he, 'you must come with me to Launceston, for I'm not such a fool as to carry money about with me, and there I will get you the cash.' 'That's all very well,' said I, 'but in this country we never let the sheep go without the money. So, if you please, the four hundred sheep that you've marked must stay here till I'm paid for 'em.' 'Very well,' said he."

"And he gave you the money at Launceston, I suppose ?" said I.

"You shall see. Give me another cup of tea. Let me tell my story my own way, or else I shall never ha' done. So I went with him to Launceston, and we had a quart of port out of the cask at the inn there—it wasn't bad stuff but,

nothing like the beer one gets at a public-house at home; and then he wrote a cheque as he called it, and told the landlord to take it to a merchant of the town, and sure enough he brought back four hundred bank-notes of four dollars each, as he said, but I couldn't make out the writing on them, the letters were so flourished about, but I thought it must be all right as the landlord was there witnessing it. He wrote an order for the sheep to my shepherd, and signed it; he asked me what my Christian name was, and I said Samuel, and he said he shouldn't have guessed it, but he dared say my shepherd would understand it, and so there I sat with the four hundred bits of paper before me.

"The landlord came in and sat down by me and talked of the news, and says he, 'Have you heard of the great failure in Hobart Town? That flashy cove that was flying his paper kites hasn't been able to raise the wind any longer!'

'Flying paper kites!' said I; 'what on earth can a man want to fly kites for? I used to fly a kite when I was a boy——' 'I see,' said he, 'you don't take. Flying kites means issuing these things (pointing to the dollar-notes), and then when it comes to paying them it's "no effects!"'

"What the landlord said had a terrible effect on me, for all of a sudden it struck me I had parted with my four hundred prime ewes for four hundred bits of paper that wasn't good enough to light pipes with. I broke out into a cold sweat directly.

"'Landlord,' said I, 'can you take me to the merchant that gave you these notes?' 'To be sure I can,' says he, 'it's only a step.' Says I to the merchant. 'I have a particular reason for wanting silver instead of paper just now. Couldn't you give me dollars instead of these notes?' 'Certainly,' said he, very polite-like; 'but I should have thought,' said he, 'you would find dollars very inconvenient to carry about.' 'Not the least in the world,' said I; so he counted 'em out and put them in an old gunny-bag, and then I put the old gunny-bag in my handkerchief, so as to look like a change of clothes, and hoisting them on a stick over my shoulder I marched back to the inn. 'That's a large sum of money,' said the landlord, 'to have in cash; and it's a great temptation to servants; I hope you are not a-going to keep it at my inn.' This was the first of my troubles. 'No,' said I, 'I'm going to take myself off home—dollars and all.' 'I should advise you,' said he, 'not to let anybody know you have that sum of money about you; it might bring you to mischief.'

"'Never fear!' said I; 'I know how to take care of myself.'

"After I had had some dinner I set out, but I found the



dollars a greater weight than I thought for, so I stopped at a settler's hut about ten miles from Launceston and sat down, intending to stay the night there.

"What have you got here?" said he, trying to lift up my load, and wondering at the weight of it. "Why, they can't be dollars? and yet they feel like 'em!" "Dollars!" said his wife, "Oh, Lord! we shall be all murdered in our beds. Pray, Mr. Crab, don't let 'em be here! You're sure to have been watched, and the prisoners will try to get 'em, and murder us all. How could you think of bringing 'em here?" "If I have brought 'em here," said I, a little hurt like, "I can take them away again. I'll go on to Old Simon's and he'll give me a lodging for the night, I dare say."

"The husband did not want me to go, and said it was nonsense; but I saw his wife wished me to be put off, so I shouldered up my dollars, and went on to old Simon's, which wasn't above two miles off by the road side.

"Can you give me a night's lodging?" said I. "With all my heart," said he; "Jem, put on some mutton chops." "What have you got here?" said he. "I'll tell you at once," said I, "because I know I can trust you; I've been selling some sheep, and these are the dollars I got for 'em." "Dollars!" said he; "how can you think of going about with such a heap of dollars? You'll be robbed and murdered before you get home. But let's put 'em out of sight."

"With that he clapped an empty tripod over 'em, just in time, for his man came in a moment after with the meat.

"I had hardly finished eating a few chops, when who should come in but three strange men: one was a ticket-of-leave man, and the other two were Government men just arrived, and they were going on to Launceston to the master that they had been assigned to. Simon gave me a look, as much as to say, 'Here's a mess!' but there was no help for it; he couldn't well refuse shelter to travellers on a winter night; so they looked about to sit themselves down, and says one—

"Any harm in moving this tripod, master, to let this seat come nearer the fire?"

"Simon gave me another look, and I saw he didn't like it; so I got up and said, 'Take my chair, I've been sitting by the fire all the evening, and I'm warm enough!' so I sat myself down on the tripod. It wasn't an easy seat, for the three prongs stuck up very awkward, let alone its being so low; but I thought that was the best thing to do; so I sat there very uncomfortable, but trying to look easy.

"You seem to have rather a hard seat, master," said one of the prisoners—kind-like. "Not a bit," said I, for a thought

came across me that he had a suspicion of what I sat there for; 'not a bit; I'd rather stay where I am.'

"Then the others offered me their seats, but the more they wanted me to get up, the more I wouldn't. 'No—no,' thought I; 'here I'll stick, my fine fellows, till I've seen you safe out of the house.'

"Old Simon was very fidgetty; he had only one spare bed which the prisoners offered to me, seeing that I was respectable looking; but I wouldn't move from my tripod, although the ends grieved me sorely; and there I was obliged to stay all night, for I didn't dare to move, like a hen sitting on eggs, and a more miserable night I never passed."

We all burst out a-laughing at this narrative, which made Crab very indignant.

"It's all very well to laugh," said he: "but how would you like to sit on a tripod all night yourself?"

"Well," said I, "how did it end?"

"End; I thought it never would end. But everything ends at last. In the morning the men went away; and then old Simon said directly—

"'For heaven's sake, Mr. Crab, make haste home. I haven't had a wink of sleep all night.'

"Says I, 'I won't trouble you long, you may depend on it; and I tried to get up, but I couldn't. I was so cramped with sitting, that I was quite stiff, and the tripod seemed to have grown to me.'

"No wonder," said I, "but how did you manage to get on?"

"Old Simon was so wishful to get rid of me and my load of dollars, that he lent me his bullock-cart to forward me on a bit, and we put the bag of dollars in the tripod, and covered it over with siftings, to make it look natural-like. He helped me to lift it into the cart, and his man drove the bullocks for about a dozen miles, and then he stopped and looked at me and then at the bullocks. I took that as a hint to get out, but I was sadly puzzled to know what to do with my money, and the tripod plagued me almost as bad. He took hold of one side of the tripod and I of the other, and we set it down by the road side.

"'Bless me,' said he, 'how heavy the old pot has got! It can't be the siftings; it's like a pot of dollars.'

"This made me quake, and I looked in his face; but I saw he said it quite innocent-like, and gave it no more thought; and so he drove back, and I stood there for some time, by the side of the money, musing a bit, for I didn't well know what to do.

"Presently I heard a precious noise of whips cracking, and I saw a lot of cattle a-scampering down the road, that the



stock-keepers were driving to the Government Store at Launceston. There were thirty of 'em, or more. On they came, helter-skelter, the stock-keepers after them, cracking their whips, and hallooing to them to keep on the road. My first thought was to sit on my tripod to guard my dollars, but before I could well know what to do, on they came, and as I sat crouched up they didn't see me till they were close upon me, and the hindmost cattle pushed on the foremost and the men urging them on behind with their whips and shouts, before I could avoid them they were on me, and one heifer, giving a snort at me with her nose, and a nuzzle with her head, tumbled me over and over, tripod and all, and the stock-keepers damned me as they dashed by for putting their cattle out of the road, and there I lay?"

"Upon my word," said my wife at this pause—all of us keeping very grave faces, for we did not dare to laugh at the mishaps which he told with so much seriousness—"you have been very unfortunate, Mr. Crab; but how could you think of carrying such a load of dollars across the country?"

"How could I help it?" said Crab, angrily; "I never had to do so at home; but in this wretched country there's no way to carry anything when you want it."

"But why didn't you take the bank notes? They would have been lighter to carry."

"Catch me taking their bank-notes, as they call 'em," replied Crab; "do you think I never saw a bank-note before? Why, they're no more like real bank-notes than chalk is like cheese! No, no; nothing like the silver dollars."

"They seem to have been a sad inconvenience to you on this occasion," said I, "these same dollars. But I am anxious to know how you managed at last."

"I couldn't manage 'em anyhow. So I was obliged to take 'em out of the tripod, and put 'em over my shoulder again, and then I didn't know what to do with the tripod. While I was thinking, I saw a gentleman and lady coming along the road in a gig, with a roof to it, and two horses, one before the other, the same as we used to put 'em in a cart in Shropshire; but they came spanking along at a precious rate. When I called out to them to stop, the gentleman pulled up sharp at this, and says he, 'What's the matter, my man?' Says I, 'May I make so bold as to ask you, as you've got two horses to your shay, and one to pull along the other, just to leave this tripod at old Simon's, about a dozen miles from here?' 'D——n your tripod,' says he, 'and you too!' He did, upon my word, although he was a gentleman; and the lady laughed and said, 'Upon my lap, I

suppose!' and then the gentleman laughed louder and gave the fore-horse a twitch with his whip, and the horse stood on his hind-legs just for a moment, turning-round like, and the lady gave a little scream, and off they went. 'Good luck to ye, and better manners,' said I, and I took up the tripod with one hand, and with my bag of dollars on my other shoulder, I walked on; but it was a weary job, and before I had gone a couple of miles I was quite knocked up. I sat down again by the road-side, and I was so tired that I was almost tempted to leave the dollars where they were, or to bury them in the bush. While I was looking about for a convenient place, I saw a lot of people coming along the road, and I soon perceived it was a road-gang of yellow-jackets going to work. I was terribly troubled at this, for I thought they might be tempted to make an attack upon me, so I clapped my bag into the tripod again, and sat down upon it, careless-like, till they should pass by. But they stopped on the road just where I was, and the overseer set them to work round about me. They laughed and jeered at me for sitting that fashion on the iron pot, but I sat firm; and then the overseer came up and asked me if I was ill, but didn't care to tell him my secret; when, luckily, there came up a bullock-cart, drawn by four bullocks, and in it was a fine buxom gal a-going to be married for a fancy in the church at Hobart Town; and the young man was with her in the cart holding her, to keep her steady, because the road was rough; and fine and merry they were. There was her father and mother in another cart behind, and seeing me sitting on my tripod, they stopped to look at me, and the young gal laughed fit to split herself, though what there was to laugh at I can't make out, for I was miserable enough, not knowing what to do with those confounded dollars, and the convicts all around me, suspecting something, I'm sure. Well, seeing them so jolly-like, I called out to them to give me a lift. 'I won't have that tripod in my cart,' screamed the gal, and then she laughed louder than ever. 'Whatever have you got in it?' said she. 'Hush,' said I. 'I'll tell you by and by.' 'How heavy it is!' said the bullock driver. 'It's heavy with the damp,' said I, not knowing what to say; 'from being on the ground;' and then there was more laughing, and the young man said I was a wag!"

"And how did you get on with your new party?" said Betsy, with her handkerchief over her mouth.

"I'll tell ye, but don't hurry me.

"I didn't like that such good-natured folks should suppose I carried that tripod about for nothing; so after we had got about a dozen miles on our way, I told 'em that I had



been selling some sheep, and that I was carrying home the dollars."

"'Dollars!'—shrieked the gal. 'Oh—heavenly gracious! we shall all be murdered, and that road-gang of prisoners will be after us to get the money. Do, pray,' said she 'get out of our cart, and get into the other one;' but the old lady was as afeard as the young one, and so I was cast adrift again with my dollars and my tripod, and with a very heavy heart I saw the carts drive out of sight!

"At last I was obliged to leave old Simon's tripod behind, and I set out again, till I reached a settler's house just before you come to Elizabeth River. I had much ado to prevail on 'em to let me and my dollars rest there for the night, and the man's wife was so frightened, that we all three sat up all night watching the money, she declaring every minute that she heard the sounds of men's feet coming to break into the house.

"They started me off in their bullock-cart next morning, glad to get rid of me, and that took me twenty miles, and I walked the remainder, and got into Jericho just at dark. There's a sergeant's party at that place, and I went into the guard-room, and asked 'em to let me sit there all night. And so there I sat, with my bag in my lap, just nodding, and afraid to sleep, and almost killed by the weight of the dollars all the long night. Next morning I started again at day-break. I thought I never should get up the Den Hill; but here I am at last, and there are those confounded dollars. But they'll serve to pay my passage home, for in this abominable place I stay no longer. Now, Betsy, my dear, have you got your pen ready?"

"I've been waiting for you all the time," replied Betsy; "what shall I say?"

"Do you write what I tell you," said Crab.

"MR. STICKITINEM:

"SIR,—This comes, hoping you are well, as I am at this present writing."

"But you are not well," said Betsy, "I never saw you look so ill in my life."

"It's the way, my dear," said Crab, waving his hand; "a letter must be begun some way, and that's the way I always begin mine—it's like the coulter that's in front of the plough. Now, go on and say,—

"This wretched country has been the death of me—and I mean to go home by the next ship. So please to take a place for me, and tell the captain to be sure to let it be somewhere near the axle-tree, where there's no motion."

"Because I remember I was qualmish coming over," added Crab, "but you needn't put that in the letter."

"And what else shall I say?" said Betsy.

"You've said it all, thank'ee, my dear; but you may just say that the last bag of sugar was wetted out of all conscience, and as gritty as a gravel cart. And tell him, that I'll give forty shillings a bushel for all the grass seed he's got left; and to try to get me some strawberry plants from the nursery garden at Pitt-Water; and to be sure to see that my bed-place on board the vessel is long enough, for I lost two inches in height in coming over, cramped up in the steerage; and ask him to see if he can get me a couple of brick-makers lent from Government! I should like to see a tidy house put up in the bottom yonder; nothing looks neater than a nice red-brick house, with a fish-pond in front, and an arbour at the bottom of the garden. And that reminds me that I shall want a shingle hammer and a cast of shingle nails; and (this rum-and-water makes one very sleepy)—and to see if the ship can take home my last year's wool, and what's the price of lamb's wool; and I want a couple of sawyers and a carpenter—to saw the ship into planks—that is the logs—and—this journey has so knocked me up that I can't write any more—my dear, write the rest yourself—you know what I want to say—I'll just finish this tumbler and then I'll go to bed."

"But what will you do with these dollars?" said my wife.

"The dollars," said Crab, his intellect worn out by the fatigue of his journey, and confused with the three tumblers of rum and water which he had unconsciously indulged in,—  
"put 'em—put 'em in the tripod."

The next day Crab got up with the early light, and to get rid of the anxiety of having these unfortunate dollars in the house, he buried them with great care and secrecy in the bush; but the very same day, the prisoner whom I have before mentioned as having been sentenced to one hundred lashes and pardoned, pitched upon the plant, and observing that the ground had lately been disturbed in an out-of-the-way place, he dug up the loose earth with a stake, and finding the gunny-bag containing the dollars, he carried it, just as it was, to the magistrate's house. An inquiry having been made, which set the whole district a-talking, the news reached us, and the bag of dollars was duly restored to Crab, who found the number of the dollars correct.

For this act of honesty the magistrate recommended the prisoner for a free pardon, which in due course he received, and he is now a flourishing settler. But the bag of dollars still remained to perplex the distracted Crab; and as the existence of this amount of silver bullion was now the talk of the whole district, we were obliged to send it to Hobart Town, escorted by Crab and two constables.



"Silver dollars," said Crab, "are a very fine thing to talk about, and to wish for, but they're very troublesome to carry about, and still more dangerous to keep by you. If one could only trust those fellows at the Bank," said he, "there's nothing like bank-notes after all."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### AFTER FOURTEEN YEARS.

It was fourteen years after the occurrences which I have related in my preceding memoirs that I was sitting in my garden under a splendid mimosa tree, which we had cherished for many years as a favourite spot, enjoying the calm of a peaceful evening.

I had for several years past resigned the active management of my farms, with my flocks and herds, to my eldest son, who, with his wife and family, resided with me in our large stone house, after the old patriarchal custom. My daughter Betsy, who had married George Beresford, 1827, had five children, and resided at Cheery-Tree Bottom, in a comfortable cottage, of which Crab, now very far advanced in years, and who for some time past had grown very feeble, was the dissatisfied owner. Beresford, the elder, had married Lucy Moss some years before, and they now resided on the banks of the Shannon River, surrounded by a numerous family.

It was the close of the summer season, in the month of March, and the face of the country had for some weeks assumed that brown autumnal tint which is the prevailing hue of the fields and foliage for the greater part of the year in Van Diemen's Land. Two tiny urchins, brother and sister, were playing near me on a plot of English grass, whose lively green and thick close sward contrasted pleasingly with the brown, coarse tufts of the native plains beyond. Rather too thickly clustered, in a space that was covered with fruits and flowers, were apple, pear, and peach trees; the former bearing the ruddy tint of the English fruit, and the latter in its full ripeness. A fine boy of eight years of age was coaxing a young kangaroo with sugar, and a white cockatoo, raising up his yellow-feathered turf, screamed and chattered on the wall to attract the notice of his playfellows. In the park-like plain below were grazing some of the dairy cows, with two or three horses, and a small pet flock of merino sheep.

I was attentively reading a volume of a work which I had

lately received from England, for being now able to indulge in my early taste for books, I had accumulated about twelve hundred volumes in a small library, which formed a room, looking on the river, especially devoted to my own serious contemplations; but the gambols of my grandchildren interrupted me continually.

I laid down my book, and was revolving as I sat the many scenes of my busy and adventurous life, when my dear wife, the companion of my labours and the sharer of my prosperity, appeared at the end of the walk, with a letter in her hand, and supporting on her arm her aged mother, who with the assistance of a staff was still able, though far advanced beyond the ordinary span of human life, to take her accustomed walks in the garden. My dear Mary was changed a little in her looks, but her heart was still as warm and as affectionate as ever. She wore her own grey hair, disdaining the artifice of conventional disguise, and boasting that she was prouder of being the grandmother of such a family than of all the brown and clustering curls of her early youth. I could tell by her countenance that she had some agreeable news to communicate as she moved toward me. She gave me the letter with a smile; it bore the mark of England, and on its seal was the single word "Georgiana."

I ought to say here, that after the Gipsy's daughter had been received in my family, immediate steps were taken by me and the magistrate for securing her legal rights in England. Various letters passed, and at the end of four years an agent, duly empowered by her legal guardians, arrived in the colony to take charge of her on a passage home. Her uncle, John Shirley, he informed us, had obtained possession of the estates as next heir; but the elder brother, William, had made a will, by which he devised the whole of his estates and property to trustees for the benefit of George Shirley, should he ever return to England, or to his children. It was impossible to dispute the will, but the uncle denied the marriage and the identity of the child. These points were easily proved in the colony; but as the trustees in England were desirous of her presence at home for their greater satisfaction, and for the better prosecution of her cause, we took advantage of the opportunity of the return of a friend and his wife to the mother country to place her under female care, and accompanied by the agent, she set sail. She was then eleven years of age, and one of the most beautiful little girls I ever saw, and beginning to be highly accomplished, for our governess had done her duty well, and the child had amply replied to the unmeasured attention which she bestowed on her.



I remember when I told my old friend, the magistrate, of her intended departure, and expressed my satisfaction that she would meet with no troubles in England, like those to which she had been exposed from the machinations of her uncle, and from the caprice of the savages in this country, my worthy and facetious friend was pleased to observe that, "Bad as that was she might be worse."

"Why, what can they do worse with her?" said I.

"Why," replied my friend, "they can put her in Chancery!"

My children, who had become attached to their affectionate playmate, were very sad, I remember, at this sort of evil prognostication on the part of my friend, thinking that to be put in Chancery was some terrible disaster; and they conjured up all sorts of horrid ideas about a prison and looking through the bars; but, when I explained to them that the Court of Chancery was a place of refuge curiously and ingeniously contrived for the redress of wrongs and for the protection of the orphan; and that in twenty or thirty years, or, at least, in the course of half a century, the rights of their young friend would be in fair progress of restoration, as shortly after that period some succeeding Lord Chancellor would probably intimate when her case might be mentioned at some future time, with a view to its being begun to be heard, they were silenced; although, I am inclined to think, not quite satisfied with my well-meant explanation.

We had received many letters from Miss Shirley since her arrival in England, and the first news that we had of her was that she was in Chancery, which spread a gloom over my family, that was cleared up, however, when we were informed that she did not suffer in her health in consequence, and that in the meantime her guardians supplied all her wants with a liberal hand; for her case was so plain that no human being had any doubt of the success of her cause, excepting of course the high functionary who had to decide on it. We were very anxious, therefore, to hear of the progress of our young friend, and it was with lively interest that I opened the letter, and read aloud its contents. It was addressed to my wife in the inside, and ran thus:—

"MY DEAREST MRS. THORNLEY,—

"My previous letters will have taught you to expect that the most important event of my life would soon take place, and that I should again change my name; but the change, I assure you, has produced no alteration in the heart towards you and yours, of your grateful Georgiana. I may now break through the reserve which I have hitherto maintained in respect to some points relating to my marriage.

"My first acquaintance with my husband began at Milan, whither my guardian had taken me, two years ago, in the course of our travels through Italy. He had gone to the opera on the evening of our arrival, without being aware of the piece that was to be performed, or not thinking of its application to myself. The opera passed off very well, but the next piece was 'The Gipsy.' The scene brought back to my recollection my early sorrows in Van Diemen's Land, and by one of those strange coincidences which sometimes take place to our wonder in real life, the dark Italian eyes of one of the performers brought back so vividly to my recollection the look of my poor father when he caressed me shortly before his melancholy fate, that I became troubled, and a tide of painful thoughts rushing in upon me, I fainted. A gentleman—young—and handsome of course, assisted my guardian to convey me to our carriage, and such assistance accepted was a sufficient introduction for the next day. Our intimacy increased, and although he was eight years older than I, he became attached to me; but I struggled hard to prevent my heart from becoming engaged, fearful that, from his rank and connections, he might despise me when he came to learn the secret of the Gipsy's daughter. This continued for the two years that we remained abroad, when, having learned to appreciate his generous character, I determined to reveal to him my terrible secret. He declared that he did not love me less, and esteemed me more, for my confidence and sincerity. Shortly after this he quitted our society under the plea of his affairs in England requiring his presence; and on our return home he presented to me a packet of papers, and immediately retired. I was alarmed at this conduct, and instantly opened the packet, when I found documents completely exculpating my dear father from any share in the death of the game-keeper, for his supposed participation in which he had been condemned to banishment. That obstacle—which indeed existed only on my part—being removed—with the consent of my guardians, I resigned my future destiny to his care, and I now write to you as his happy wife.

"When I reflect on my present happiness, my dearest second mother, I cannot but feel my large debt of gratitude for your fostering care of the forlorn Gipsy's daughter; and how can I repay you for all your kindness, and for the kindness of your children to me? Pray remember me to them all; to the grave William, the merry Betsy, or rather I should call her Mrs. George Beresford; to the good-natured Edward—and is he still called 'Sporting Ned?'—to Mary, and to Lucy, and though last not least, to my dearest Ellen, who used to romp with me; nor must I forget my dear old



governess, Mrs. Ramsay, who I hope continues in your family, and who was so kind and good to the orphan wanderer. I am almost tempted to wish that you were very poor that I might have the delight of sharing with you what we possess, for we are very rich; but your flocks and herds I hear almost cover the island, and with your large estates, your carriages, and your horses, and your baronial house, and all your patriarchal abundance, I am at a loss to know what to send out to you. I wish you would convey your fifteen thousand acres of land to England! And only think of that acre of land which Mr. Thornley bought in Hobart Town some years ago turning out such a valuable property; but of course as land is wanted in a town for building houses on as the inhabitants increase, every square foot, as my husband says, becomes valuable.

"My dear husband has sent out two beautiful horses for Mr. Thornley, and some curious cattle and Saxon sheep for William; and I have sent a grand pianoforte with the latest improvements for Mary, which will stand very nicely at the end of your large room; and a harp for Ellen, with quantities of music. I have also to request Edward to accept the choicest double-barrel gun, with all sorts of apparatus which I don't understand, that can be purchased in London, and my husband has taken particular pains in selecting it. I was at a loss to know what remembrance to send to Lucy, but I have been fortunate enough to find a beautiful cabinet at a curiosity shop, made at Vienna, for the Empress Maria Louisa of France, with which I think she will be pleased, as it accords with the splendour of her romantic disposition. I have sent also a self-acting organ for Betsy, that she may have music, as she used to say she should like, without the trouble of playing. Don't you remember she used to say, in her merry way, she would as soon grind the old portable corn-mill as a hand-organ? And now, what have I to say more? Oh! it is to ask you to send us another kangaroo and some of the pretty Rosina parrots that we made such pets of.

"Mr. John Shirley is living abroad, and my affairs are still in Chancery; but as we are rich enough, we have the satisfaction, my husband says, of considering that the estates will some day come to our great-grandchildren. Mr. Shirley is inclined, I understand, to compromise the matter by his being allowed a small annuity for life of three thousand a year, which would be nothing for the property to pay, and our solicitors advise us to accept it; but my husband will not forgive him for endeavouring to steal me away as he did, and exposing me to the risk of being killed and eaten by the

natives, in order to marry me to his son. And now, my dear Mrs. Thornley, and my dear friends, I bid you, for the present, adieu; wishing you a continuance of your present prosperity and happiness. And that you may long live to enjoy the many delights of children, friends, fortune, and independence, with which Providence has blessed you, is the prayer of your ever affectionate and grateful

“GEORGIANA.”

“*Postscript.*—I declare I had forgotten to ask after my old friend Mr. Crab. He was very old, and getting infirm, I thought, when I left the country. Is he still alive? and does he still go on grumbling, and declaring that he will leave the ‘horrid, wretched country by the very next ship?’ Again,

“Yours,

GEORGY.”

“Kind, good-hearted old man!” said I, “He will be glad to hear that the little girl, whom he was so fond of, has not forgotten her old friend; but I fear, from the account we received of him last night, that he will not be in this world long, to receive such remembrances.”

As I spoke George Beresford arrived on horseback, and in haste, to inform us that the symptoms which had exhibited themselves the evening before had become more alarming, and that Betsy wished me to come over immediately. I desired a horse to be saddled instantly, and leaving my wife to follow in the carriage, I made the best of my way with my son-in-law to Cherry-Tree Bottom.

On our way we called at the surgeon’s, and mounting him on a led horse, which my groom had brought with him for the purpose, he accompanied us, to see if art could do anything to prolong the life of my old friend.

“I fear,” said the surgeon, “that all art is useless in this case; he is dying of sheer old age. How old really is he?”

“We don’t exactly know,” said I, “he owns to eighty-two, but from his remembrance of past events in England, we think he must be much older.”

We soon arrived at Cherry-Tree Bottom, which was situated in a little hollow, embosomed among the surrounding hills. Crab had made the very model of an English farm, and the rick-yard contained, in addition to several imposing stacks of wheat thatched to a nicety, and kept untouched, “because,” as he said, “they make a farm-house look warm and home-like,” a tolerable stack of hay made from native grass. The garden presented the autumnal maturity of luxuriance, which is so striking in this country, and an ample orchard of cherry-



trees proclaimed that the name of the favoured spot was now deservedly bestowed.

On a stubble-field, enclosed within a hawthorn-hedge, two horses in a line were ploughing, with a Shropshire plough, Crab holding in abomination the colonial practice of employing bullocks in ploughs and carts. Within sight of the house a pond had with much labour been excavated to receive the waters of a little rivulet that took its source from a distant tier of hills. Indisputable English geese and ducks disported themselves in this capacious reservoir, gladdening the old man's eyes with the picture of his early youth. But those eyes were now about to close; and with a heaviness of heart which I did not attempt to suppress, I approached the door of my ancient friend's dwelling.

We found the old man seated in an easy chair, his silvery white hair hanging on his shoulders, by an open window, having a view at the same time of his wheat-stacks, his duck-pond, and his twelve-acre wheat-field, at which his servants were now at work. He had been complaining, Betsy told us, of the mistiness of the atmosphere, although the air was clear and pure—I well knew what this mistiness meant.

"Here's father coming to see you," said Betsy, raising her voice a little, for a little deafness had been for some time one of the old man's infirmities.

"Thornley, I'm glad to see you. Where are you? come closer; the air is very dim: I suppose it's the natives that have fired the country, and it's all smoke—as it always is in this place?"

"There are no natives now," said Betsy, "to fire the country; they have all been removed these many years."

"Have they? Ah! I remember something about those surveying expeditions, and what fun it was! making a line across the country, and the natives behind us all the while wondering what we were after!"

"How do you feel, my dear friend?" said I, soothingly.

"Very weak—very weak indeed. You see, Thornley, this wretched country has killed me at last. I always said it would, but you never would believe me. But it serves me right, yes, quite right; I ought to have left it long ago. It was those hops that deluded me on."

"You have shown the colonists how to grow hops," said I, wishing to please him by a little praise, which he well deserved.

"Ah! haven't I? And taught them how to make beer, too? Betsy, my dear, tell them to get your father a jug of that last tap. Let me taste it." They put the cup to his lips.

"How's this! it tastes oddly! Get some more in another jug. Thornley musn't come to my house and not have a glass of ale! But I shall grow no more hops! and drink no more of my own home-brewed ale!"

"My dear friend," said I, "you have lived a longer life than is ordinarily the lot of man; and your latter years have been passed in a state of prosperity far beyond your early expectations. Let us hope that the Great Being who has blessed the latter part of your career with so much wealth and ease will regard all your complainings in this life with an indulgent eye; and that your life hereafter may be such as He has promised to those who keep His word, and trust in Him."

"I don't know," said Crab—in a slow and feeble voice, his mind beginning to wander—"that I have done much amiss—except the coming to this wretched country, and the staying in it, which is worse; but I'll go home by the next ship. Not a drop of beer to be had in the country for love or money! what's the use of a public-house if there's no beer in it? Half-a-guinea for a bottle of stout! It's shameful! Did you ever see a chap plough a field that way before? Not know what lying fallow means! You're a cockney! I don't wish to be uncivil—but you're a cockney! I say you're a cockney!"

"His mind is wandering," said the benevolent clergyman attached to the Clyde Church; "but his life has been so innocent, and his intentions so good, that if ever spirit ascended to the presence of its Maker with hope and trust, such may be the reliance of this single-hearted old man!"

My wife now arrived; but it was with difficulty that our dying friend could be made to recognise her; and when he did, his waning intellects referred to times and scenes foreign to the present.

"Mrs. Thornley," said he, in slow and feeble accents, "your poor husband has been killed by the natives; but we must bear it—we must bear it. To roast him alive; the savages! But we'll all leave the country. I'm going to leave the country. Where's Betsy?"

Betsy took hold of the old man's hand, and spoke to him.

The clergyman now asked him if there was anything that he wished to say—anything that he wished to have done?

The questions of the divine roused the old man to a consciousness of his present state, and recalled his mind from its feeble wanderings. But his voice became weaker and weaker, and his pulse grew more feeble in its flutterings—and it was with difficulty that we could make out the meaning of what he uttered.



"I know," he said in a whisper scarcely articulate—"that—we—must—all die!—but—I—wanted to see how that wheat turned out—in—the—new—field. George—never—plough with—oxen—and—don't—shoot—the bull, as you did—the—other one. I—am—going—I—am—going. Betsy—hold—my—hand. What do I feel? Betsy—I am—stifling—I—I—I—can't—breathe—my—breath—Thornley—I am—going—at—last—out—of—this—wretch—wretch—wretch—ed—country—home—at—last."

And so he died.

There was not a dry eye in the room. For my own part, I sobbed like a child; although my dear old friend had died full of years and prosperity, and in peace and hope. But he was my ancient friend, my earliest companion in the colony, and I loved him for the very whims and failings for which others laughed at him.

"That was one of the best hearts in one of the roughest husks that I had ever to deal with," said the surgeon. And so thought we all, but for some time no one spoke, and I retired with a sad heart to the banks of the Clyde.

We buried our old friend in the churchyard which had been consecrated with the church by the Bishop of Australia. Over his grave I placed a modest tablet with this simple inscription:—

HERE LIE THE MORTAL REMAINS

OF

SAMUEL CRAB,

AN

ENGLISH FARMER,

AGED 86.

THE END.

ALL



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